AN ANALYSIS OF THE ONGOING VALIDITY OF THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS FOR FINAL FORM INTERPRETATION: THE PORTRAYAL OF OUTSIDERS IN THE ABRAHAMIC NARRATIVES AS A CASE STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

There are few discussions in biblical studies that contain as much promise and controversy for understanding the biblical text as does a conversation on the proposed sources of the Pentateuch. The following work on the portrayal of outsiders in the Abrahamic narratives, specifically how they are portrayed in the traditional sources of Genesis, necessarily enters into this controversial world. This thesis will investigate three inter-connected questions. First, how are outsiders portrayed in the Abrahamic narratives? Secondly, is the portrayal of outsiders different between the different sources of Genesis, and, if so, what does the possible historical context of each source contribute to an understanding of why these differences exist? This in turn will contribute to the larger and third question: does the Documentary Hypothesis specifically, and diachronic analysis in general, have sufficient value for understanding the text as it now stands? It will be shown that while the Documentary Hypothesis involves some speculation, it offers a more coherent framework through which one can interpret and understand many of the complexities that arise in a reading of the Pentateuch. As such, diachronic analysis proves to be an invaluable tool for interpreting the final form of Genesis, if one is aware of its limitations.

INTRODUCTION

There are few discussions in biblical studies that contain as much promise and controversy for understanding the biblical text as does a conversation on the proposed sources of the Pentateuch.[1] The following work on the portrayal of outsiders in the Abrahamic narratives, specifically how they are portrayed in the traditional sources of Genesis, necessarily enters into this controversial world.

It must be stated, that much of any source-critical work on Genesis rests on some amount of hypothetical assumptions. This can make it quite dizzying and frustrating for even the avid scholar who attempts to embark on a journey cataloging and interacting with the sources of Genesis. Indeed, throughout my own research there were moments where I was sorely tempted to throw up my hands in frustration and pursue a more clear-cut method of studying the text, such as narrative or literary criticism. However, as helpful and enlightening as these methods are, they do not answer the question which, for me, stands at the base of the text: how was the text formed to be what we have now? To some this is an unanswerable question, a mystery best left unsolved; to get behind the text is an impossible task that will only serve to make a mess. Indeed, to some extent this is true. The traditional Documentary Hypothesis becomes more convoluted and less defined the closer one looks at the text as a more nuanced and fragmented picture emerges. When entering the scholarly discussion, one encounters a diverse range of opinions on the classification and social settings that surround each passage. Each of these opinions are put forward by scholars who believe they offer the most cogent and defensible understanding of a

[1] For excellent introductions to the discussion of the Documentary Hypothesis, see Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 15–32; Gordon J. Wenham, "Composition of the Pentateuch," in *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Pentateuch*, vol. 1 of *Exploring the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 159–85.

passage, and quite often the opinions of different scholars regarding the same passage are mutually exclusive. This can lead readers to feel more like they are witnessing an argument between schoolchildren bickering about seemingly insignificant points than a serious scholarly discussion. Yet, despite this ambiguity, the Documentary Hypothesis, in some form, continues to hold sway in Pentateuchal studies because in a broad context it sufficiently answers many questions that emerge in the study of the text. Nicholson notes, "That the [Documentary Hypothesis] won [scholars'] support was not therefore because one could write 'Q.E.D.' below it, but because it offered a more cogent and comprehensive explanation than its rivals of the problems that an analysis of the text yields, even though it made no claim to solve all of them."[2] Indeed, in a more recent work, Baden similarly notes the following regarding the overall sufficiency of the Documentary Hypothesis despite its explanatory shortcomings: "[The areas of the text which remain difficult to explain] are reminders that we are dealing with what must have been a historically messy literary project and that perfection of explanation, like perfection of transmission, is probably too much to ask."[3]

What we have in the Abrahamic narratives, and in Genesis more generally, is akin to a mosaic. From a distance we can see that a relatively coherent and beautiful picture emerges. We can see an intelligible progression and cohesion. And yet, it becomes clear that as we get closer to the mosaic it is made up of different constituent parts with a blend of different theologies, and that however skillfully they have been arranged together each has a different past. Looking even

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[2] Ernest Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 27. For a more recent discussion on the "unreadability" of the Pentateuch in its present form, and the necessity of source-critical answers to this problem, see Joel S. Baden, "Why Is the Pentateuch Unreadable? – Or, Why Are We Doing This Anyway?," in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, ed. Jan C. Gertz et al., FAT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 243–51.

[3] Joel S. Baden, "Continuity between the Gaps – The Pentateuch and the Kirta Epic," in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, ed. Jan C. Gertz et al., FAT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 283.

closer, even in a "traditional" form of the Documentary Hypothesis, one must understand that the individual sources are themselves composed of varying elements of tradition, but that the authors, editors, redactors, and scribes behind these sources have combined them in their own coherent styles.[4] This multilayered dimension, in combination with the span of time involved, is what makes source criticism in the Pentateuch so difficult.

A Survey of the Documentary Landscape

First, a brief foray deeper into the concerns surrounding the Documentary Hypothesis in general is warranted.[5] As was also discussed above, one of the inherent downsides of this theory has been the uncertainty and ambiguity which plagues documentary theory and source criticism in general.[6] Nevertheless, despite this inherent uncertainty, scholars such as Zevit have contended that the underlying theory of "Pentateuchal documents and their editing retains its essential validity, and in light of the Samaritan Pentateuch and of some cuneiform historical and literary compositions, may almost be considered empirically substantiated."[7] As a result, the Documentary Hypothesis seems to dwell in a never-ending tension. On the surface it is ostensibly the best theory to explain the state of the Pentateuch as it exists now: an amalgamation of various sources. However, this security is countered by the diverse range of opinions and theories as to exactly how this division plays out and how one might identify the various sources.

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[4] Terence E. Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," *RevExp* 74.3 (1977): 302.

[5] For a more up-to-date and thorough discussion of the current state of source criticism on the Pentateuch, see Jan C. Gertz et al., eds., *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, FAT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

[6] For an article that discusses the possible empirical validity of the Documentary Hypothesis, see Jeffrey H. Tigay, "An Empirical Basis for the Documentary Hypothesis," *JBL* 94.3 (1975): 329–342.

[7] Ziony Zevit, "Converging Lines of Evidence Bearing on the Date of P," *ZAW* 94.4 (1982): 483.

For example, one of the cornerstones of the Documentary Hypothesis and all its derivatives has been the existence of doublets, sections of the text where the same story or elements of a story seem to be repeated. Some prominent examples of this in the early chapters of Genesis include: the creation narratives, repetition within the flood narrative, the sister-wife episodes, and Abraham's seeming double covenants with God in Genesis 15 and 17.[8] While some scholars see these doublets as clear indications of multiple sources, others are not so sure. For a brief rehashing of the discussion, we will turn to Propp who discusses the issue of doublets in light of a unified P narrative. Propp contends that a single author is far less likely to allow repeating passages, even if they are not contradictory, than an editor or redactor would be.[9] However, as will be seen below in a comparison of Genesis 15 and 17, others, such as Williamson, argue that some doublets, such as the dual covenants between God and Abraham, can be adequately explained on a synchronic level without the need to appeal to different sources. Nevertheless, even if Williamson is granted his explanation for this particular episode in Genesis, other instances both within Genesis and in the rest of the Pentateuch are not so easily understandable from a synchronic perspective. Detractors of the Documentary Hypothesis might argue that this can be better explained by appealing rather to an oral history behind a single crafted text. Besides the fact that this is merely advocating for another form of a "Documentary Hypothesis," albeit in oral form, Propp aptly comments why this is unlikely:

> Of course, much biblical tradition has an oral pre-history. But a story-teller dependent on diverse and diverging oral sources—e.g., a parent recounting a fairy tale—will inevitably homogenize in the new rendition, making reconstruction of sources nigh impossible. I fully agree with Gunkel, Noth and von Rad: the Torah's internal inconsistencies must first be approached by literary analysis, before one speculates about oral antecedents.[10]

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[8] For a larger list of doublets, see Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 22.

[9] William Henry Propp, "The Priestly Source Recovered Intact," *VT* 46.4 (1996): 460.

[10] Propp, "The Priestly Source Recovered Intact," 461 n.13.

As a result, while there are certainly still detractors, the very nature of the text with its internal inconsistences continues to invite arguments in favour of some form of the Documentary Hypothesis. This leads scholars such as Friedman to continue to argue that it is not *an* answer to these inconsistencies, it is the best answer.[11] Yet, it is also important that the reader keep in mind that, as a theory, the Documentary Hypothesis is not without its limitations. This will become apparent as the investigation below continues.

In addition, modern proponents of the Documentary Hypothesis would do well to include in their theories and discussions an investigation of the role scribes have played in the development of tradition.[12] The text being analyzed was not simply written by an "author" and sealed in a vacuum until it was passed on to a reader. Throughout the history of the text it has been copied and in many cases adapted to new contexts by scribes who played a vital role in the passing on of tradition. Integrating this reality into the critical process would lead to an enriched understanding of the development the text may have endured prior to what it is now. Moreover, this would address some of the shortcomings in the Documentary Hypothesis that an imposition of the modern notions of authorship has created. One interesting example which could aid future study would be to study the Danielic tradition and its formation. An analysis of this tradition aided by the discoveries in the Dead Sea Scrolls could form a concrete example of the scribal practices of amalgamating similar pieces of tradition that later become forged into a single document.

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[11] Richard Elliott Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003), 27–31.

[12] This is an avenue that is indeed starting to be explored. For examples, see David M. Carr, "Data to Inform Ongoing Debates about the Formation of the Pentateuch – From Documented Cases of Transmission History to a Survey of Rabbinic Exegesis," in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, ed. Jan C. Gertz et al., FAT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 89–106; Molly M. Zahn, "Scribal Revision and the Composition of the Pentateuch – Methodological Issues," in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, ed. Jan C. Gertz et al., FAT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 491–500.

The Questions Asked and Methodology

The following work is the result of my own journey through this discussion. As the journey continued the question I sought to answer was transformed and expanded by the inherently uncertain nature of source-critical work on the Pentateuch. What began as a question of how the different sources of the Pentateuch portrayed outsiders has expanded into a larger discussion on the value of diachronic analysis in reading the final form of Genesis, in light of its inherent complexity and ambiguity. As a result, what follows will attempt to address this larger question through a case study of the portrayal of outsiders in the Abrahamic narratives in each of the traditional sources.

First, a clarification of certain terms is necessary. Some of the most relevant for this thesis are: outsiders, diachronic analysis, synchronic analysis, and the Documentary Hypothesis. When referring to outsiders, I am including any persons who are not part of Abraham's direct family and lineage (with lineage referring specifically to the historical people/nation of Israel). It should be noted that such a classification is in some sense an external literary categorization, owing more to a later period of when the narratives are told than when they are set. Indeed a curious feature of the Abrahamic narratives is that, due to his nomadic lifestyle, Abraham and his family are the real outsiders in many of the stories. Nevertheless, I believe that this categorization offers a unique opportunity to explore the life of the text as it is transmitted from generation to generation within the Israelite community. Next, diachronic analysis is a method which takes into account the entire lifespan of the text, including any background discussions on the origins of individual components or sources. This is contrasted with synchronic analysis which focuses on interpreting the text at one particular moment in time, commonly in its final form, without regard to the history of the text's development. Finally, when referring to the

Documentary Hypothesis I am not referring exclusively to the theories put forward by Wellhausen, Noth, or others, concerning four sources with a common basis. While these theories are certainly included, the reference is not limited to them, but also encompasses other elements such as the supplementary or fragmentary hypotheses. I do this both for convenience and because the Documentary Hypothesis is the most well-known among these theories. Where needed, I will refer specifically to other sub-theories.

Secondly, as a starting point I shall be using the MT, as reconstructed in *BHS*, based on the Leningrad codex, and shall refer to it as the "text".[13] While historically speaking, the Leningrad codex is rather late (11th century CE), recent discoveries of manuscripts, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, have demonstrated its overall reliability.[14] This is not to say that the scrolls found at Qumran are identical to the MT, nor that the MT should be assumed to be the "best" version of the Hebrew text. On the contrary, the discoveries at Qumran have solidified the understanding that the MT is merely one representative of ancient textual tradition, with others, such as the Hebrew behind the LXX and the Samaritan Pentateuch, also holding an important place for understanding the life of the text in a community.[15] The MT is a text type that "won the day" and is as a result far more prolific.[16] In many cases, the textual reconstruction of the

[13] For more on the textual traditions behind the Hebrew Bible, see Peter W. Flint, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2013), 77–81; Armin Lange, "From Many to One – Some Thoughts on the Hebrew Textual History of the Torah," in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, ed. Jan C. Gertz et al., FAT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 121–95.

[14] Flint, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 53.

[15] Emanuel Tov makes the following poignant note concerning the further eclectic nature of the MT: "Moreover, even were we to surmise that 𝔐 reflects the 'original' form of the Bible, we would still have to decide which Masoretic Text reflects this 'original text,' since the Masoretic Text is not a uniform textual unit, but is itself represented by many witnesses (cf. pp. 21–25)." Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Second Revised Edition. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 11. See also Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 164–80.

[16] For example, Tov notes that roughly 35 percent of the biblical texts found at Qumran were proto-Masoretic texts, which "…probably reflects their authoritative status (cf. p. 191)." See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 117.

"original text" found in *BHS* does reflect this understanding.[17] As a result, for accessibility and simplicity, the MT in *BHS* shall be used as a starting point, with the above caveats kept in mind. However, there are also instances where other ancient textual traditions differ from the MT in the passages covered below. Where other ancient versions substantially differ from the MT, they will be noted. The necessity of using the MT as a basis for serious scholarly investigation, bearing in mind the above points regarding ancient textual traditions, should also make certain methodological limitations clear: because the MT is only one of several ancient text types, any source reconstruction based solely on it will always be necessarily incomplete.[18]

This study will employ the tools of source criticism and will conduct a passage by passage exposition on the occurrences of outsiders in the Abrahamic narratives. For the sake of convenience and clear structure I will use Noth's classification of passages as a starting point.[19] First, a general introduction to each of the classical sources will occur, containing discussions on the historical, literary, and textual contexts put forward by various scholars. This section, and the subsequent discussions surrounding the classification of each individual passage, will serve as an ongoing reminder of the complexity and ambiguity found in such a discussion as the differing theories and opinions of various scholars will be noted. Subsequently, each occurrence of outsiders will be mined for its contribution to each source's overall portrayal of outsiders before a source-critical discussion of the passage in question exploring the ongoing validity of each

[17] For more on *BHS,* and text critical editions in general, see also Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 289–90, 371–77.

[18] A similar point is made by Zahn. See Zahn, "Scribal Revision and the Composition of the Pentateuch – Methodological Issues," 499–500.

[19] It is worth noting that although Noth's classification shall be used as a starting point in the forthcoming study, he was neither the first nor the only scholar to produce a classification of each passage. His classification is being used simply for the reason that when entering the dizzying field of source criticism surrounding Genesis, it is somewhere to start.

passage's classification. This will be followed by what, if any, contribution diachronic analysis makes to an understanding of the passage's various contexts and its viewpoint.

As a result my thesis will investigate three inter-connected questions. First, how are outsiders portrayed in the Abrahamic narratives? Secondly, is the portrayal of outsiders different between the different sources of Genesis, and, if so, what does the possible historical context of each source contribute to an understanding of why these differences exist? This in turn will contribute to the larger and third question: does the Documentary Hypothesis specifically, and diachronic analysis in general, have sufficient value for understanding the text as it now stands? To put it another way, this seeks to evaluate the value of the Documentary Hypothesis for final form interpretation.

For me these three questions are integrated and yet come from different spheres. The question of outsiders in general for me bears immediate ramifications and relevance for contemporary Christianity and the church, whereas the sub-question of how the different sources portray this on an individual and compared basis has value for the larger scholarly discussion. The third question, while rooted in scholarly concerns, ultimately also seeks an answer for both the scholar and the lay reader of Genesis.

While seeking to answer this third question it is imperative to keep in tension two ideas: the first is that the text has been shaped by a plurality of authors, redactors, and scribes each in their own particular context. This is an idea that is relatively easy for a modern interpreter to keep in view. The second comes from a time and mindset that is quite foreign to modern readers: the passing on of tradition simply because it is valuable in its own right. This latter point is well expressed by Westermann:

> It is further certain that the meaning of the written works cannot be read *simply* from the message addressed by the writers to their contemporary listeners or readers with their

> particular biases. Besides the intention of giving their contemporaries some appropriate advice, exhortations, and admonitions by means of the old stories, there is another intention of equal importance. They intend to pass on to their contemporaries what they themselves have received, something that has no concern with the contemporary situation but which is to be heard and passed on yet again so that it may have a voice in a quite different situation known neither to the listeners nor to the bearer of the tradition.[20]

He continues this train of thought in helpful ways:

> One must guard the character of narrative against a further misunderstanding. Modern exegesis takes the greatest pains to reduce the patriarchal narratives to an intellectually comprehensible message. One tries to derive this from what the author of the narratives wanted to say to the readers and listeners of his own time. Behind this attitude is the conviction, so deeply embedded in western thought, that every text, and this includes narrative, must have an author. And this author must have something to say to his own contemporaries, even when he is addressing people of times long passed; it is the task of exegesis to extract this message.[21]

By this Westermann is stating that a narrative is not able to, or even meant to, speak *only* to *one* particular time, but that it is constantly able to speak to a new era. The vitality of storytelling is not that we can simply distill from it a lesson, but that in the telling and retelling we can enter into the narrative and ourselves experience the lesson along with those in the story. Moreover, in some cases the story is passed along and recited simply as a way to remember and keep alive the past, without regard to any lesson. As a result, to answer the third question we must not reject the historical circumstance surrounding a text or necessarily overemphasize it, but instead seek to evaluate whether diachronic analysis offers helpful addition to understanding this circumstance.

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[20] Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36: A Commentary*, trans. J. J. Scullion, vol. 2 of *CC* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 33. Emphasis added.

[21] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 46.

THE PORTRAYAL OF OUTSIDERS IN THE J SOURCE

Introduction

To better understand the significance of how the traditional J source depicts outsiders in the Abrahamic narratives, one must first seek to understand the possible contexts of the J source. I say possible because the context of any source is fraught with complexity and nuance and cannot be known for certain. However, it is possible to make certain educated guesses. First, we will explore the characteristics and possible historical contexts surrounding the formation of the J narratives followed briefly by the textual context in the larger Genesis narrative. Subsequently, this chapter will then examine all the occurrences of outsiders within the J narratives of Abraham's life.[1] Together, these explorations will demonstrate that although Abraham is given preferential treatment, being the de facto "insider," the J sources demonstrate a remarkable tolerance and even care for outsiders. Next each of the texts will be evaluated in a source-critical discussion to foster a further understanding of the J source and to explore the ongoing validity of Noth's classifications, as well as a brief reflection on the ongoing value of diachronic analysis for final form interpretation.

Characteristics of the J Source

One of the most common and known identifying factors of the J source has often been the use of the divine name יהוה, among other distinct vocabulary.[2] However, as of late this approach has been increasingly challenged, especially by scholars such as Van Seters, Whybray, and

[1] For simplicity I will use Abraham instead of Abram throughout this paper, even when discussing passages prior to Genesis 15 where the name changes, unless Abram appears in a direct quotation from a passage or a source.

[2] For an excellent presentation of the various features that distinguish each source, see Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 7–31.

Baden,[3] although Baden also counters some of the arguments levelled against divine name usage.[4] In terms of other identifying markers put forward by other scholars, McEvenue also notes that the Yahwist often makes use of ellipses, where information critical to the story is assumed or left out of the narrative, and that the Yahwist's "work is marked by theological depth and literary genius."[5] The J source is often distinguished from the P source by a marked difference in style, though the same cannot be said for the E source with which it shares many similarities.[6] Nevertheless, Friedman makes a case that when separated, the J source and the E source display marked concern for the southern and northern kingdoms respectively.[7] However, Baden highlights that one can only identify themes and motifs after a source has been isolated and, therefore, these themes and motifs cannot be used to isolate sources from one another, especially given that there can be overlap in themes between sources.[8] Instead, Baden proposes that one should seek to identify the J source based on consistency and continuity within the narrative, which he argues demonstrates that it is its own unified source.[9]

While Baden's argument certainly has merit, the question of what to do with elements (not necessarily themes) of a certain text that would likely indicate a certain time period remains. For example, if Genesis 3 is found to have details that correlate to the exile, could not that

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[3] John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 156; R. N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*, JSOTSup (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 63–68; Joel S. Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch : Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis*, The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 106, 111.

[4] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 112. See also Zeev Weisman, "The Interrelationship between J and E in Jacob's Narrative: Theological Criteria," *ZAW* 104.2 (1992): 177–78.

[5] McEvenue gives for example the building of the Ark in J, and how Pharaoh knew that Sarah was Abraham's wife in Gen 12:18. See Sean E. McEvenue, "Comparison of Narrative Styles in the Hagar Stories," *Semeia* 3 (1975): 65, 71. The quotation is taken from p. 65.

[6] Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1 of *WBC* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), xxx; Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 83–85; Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 59–62.

[7] Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 61–83.

[8] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 106–7.

[9] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 67–81.

correlation then be used to explore other possible similarities within the J narrative that would not have been possible had the connection not had been made?[10] Granted the correlation would only be valid in *other* texts if internal textual grounds have already linked them in some way. Therefore, as Baden argues, in order to make the most use of historical connections and possibilities, sources must first be broadly defined according to literary characteristics in the text. Then, a historical investigation and the context of an individual text's creation may be explored to help further nuance the findings of the original literary analysis.

If there is a J Source, Is it a Contiguous Narrative or Fragmentary?

If we follow the lead of Westermann, which I believe is prudent and was alluded to above, then to a certain degree each source is by nature fragmentary, containing various layers of tradition that are stitched together with varying levels of overarching narrative skill. As a result, while J is in general a "contiguous" narrative, it is also necessarily in part fragmented as it contains layers of tradition woven within it.[11] Nevertheless, some scholars, such as Rendtorff, have sought to discount the unity of a J source that stretches throughout the Pentateuch, citing the lack of reference to prominent promise themes outside of the patriarchal narratives.[12] This in turn has been countered by other scholars such as Whybray who hold that though the promises are not explicitly mentioned, the very narratives serve as the fulfillment and answer to the

[10] The connections between Genesis 3 and the exile will be further explored below in the discussion on the historical context of the J source.

[11] See also for example John A. Emerton, "The Date of the Yahwist," in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, T & T Clark. (London, 2004), 107–8.

[12] Rolf Rendtorff, "The 'Yahwist' as Theologian: Dilemma of Pentateuchal Criticism," *JSOT* 1.3 (1976): 9–10.

promises.[13] Baden also staunchly defends the overall unity and continuity of the J source, as was touched on briefly above.[14]

Historical Context of the J Source

The dating of J has undergone a tremendous amount of revision throughout the history of the Documentary Hypothesis. Prior to Wellhausen, it was largely held that E was antecedent to J, and subsequent to his arguments J became the earlier of the two sources, with both being dated to the monarchical period.[15] This turn came about as a result of Wellhausen's assumptions regarding the evolution of religion and his determination that J contained an earlier phase in this development.[16] However, this assumption is also being brought under increasing scrutiny, with some, such as Weisman, arguing once again that the E text represents the earliest stratum, and that it was J who combined the stories of the three patriarchs and is also the dominant layer of the Abrahamic narratives.[17]

Many scholars since have agreed that the J source took shape in the time of the united monarchy, likely in the Solomonic era.[18] More specifically, von Rad suggests that the J

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[13] R. N. Whybray, "Response to Professor Rendtorff," *JSOT* 1.3 (1976): 13. So also Wagner, though he views this linking as the work of a post-exilic Yahwistic compiler. See Norman E. Wagner, "A Response to Professor Rolf Rendtorff," *JSOT* 1.3 (1976): 24–26.

[14] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 67–81.

[15] Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen*, 13–14. For more on this shift, see the comments and notes in the next chapter on the dating of E. Knohl still defends the priority of E over J. See Israel Knohl, *The Divine Symphony: The Bible's Many Voices* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2003), 155.

[16] Weisman, "The Interrelationship between J and E in Jacob's Narrative," 179.

[17] Weisman, "The Interrelationship between J and E in Jacob's Narrative," 193. See also Knohl who argues against the school of thought that Israelite religion was an "incremental evolution." Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 9.

[18] Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, Rev. ed., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 16; Hans Walter Wolff, "Kerygma of the Yahwist," *Int* 20.2 (1966): 135–36; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, xlii–xlv; Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 305; Robert North, "Can Geography Save J from Rendtorff?," *Bib* 63.1 (1982): 53–54. For a more thorough analysis of J's possible southern provenance, as opposed to the northern E, see North, "Can Geography Save J from Rendtorff?"

narratives were formed in the period of the united monarchy when questions regarding the immanence of God began to emerge in the face of the emerging state.[19] Indeed, the declarations in Genesis 12 that Abraham shall be a great *nation* and not just a people and that God will make his name great, [20] in connection with God similarly telling David in 2 Samuel 7:9 that he will make David's name great, points towards this time period.[21] In addition, this is the first period in Israel's history where any sort of organizational government is formed that would allow for the scribal culture needed to likely produce such a document. Asen also finds similarities between the theological views of Amos and J which if valid would indeed point to the eighth century or earlier.[22]

Contrary to the view of a monarchic J, lately there have been a growing number of scholars who have opted for a later date of compilation for the J narratives, though with the admission that they also contain material from earlier times. Van Seters in particular dates the J source to the exilic times, or the neo-Babylonian period, finding the close relationship between the primeval histories of Genesis and Babylonian myths distinctly telling.[23] This exilic text, he postulates, was written as a "prologue and extension of D in the Dtr History."[24] Van Seters views

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[19] Rad, *Genesis*, 30.

[20] James Muilenburg, "Abraham and the Nations: Blessing and World History," *Int* 19.4 (1965): 391–92.

[21] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 1–17*, vol. 1 of *NICOT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 372; Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 306. For some examples of possible implication that this socio-historic time period would have on the reception of J's text see Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 309.

[22] Bernhard A. Asen, "No, Yes and Perhaps in Amos and the Yahwist," *VT* 43.4 (1993): 433–441.

[23] John Van Seters, *The Pentateuch: A Social-Science Commentary* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 122; Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 310. For another presentation of Van Seters exilic date for the Yahwist, based on an analysis of "'êl" epithets in Genesis, see John Van Seters, "The Religion of the Patriarchs in Genesis," *Bib* 61.2 (1980): 220–233.

[24] John Van Seters, "Dating the Yahwist's History: Principles and Perspectives," *Bib* 96.1 (2015): 2. Cryer also finds evidence of Yahwistic redaction of some Deuteronomic texts that would lend weight to Van Seter's claims. See Frederick H. Cryer, "On the Relationship Between the Yahwistic and the Deuteronomistic Histories," *BN* 29 (1985): 58–74.

the J source as written by an author/editor/scribe who "made quite creative use of older traditions in order to construct a history from the creation of humanity and the patriarchs to their sojourn in Egypt, and from the exodus of the Israelite descendants to their entrance into the Promised Land."[25] Levin and Hunter draw a similar conclusion as Van Seters and posit that although there are elements of earlier times, such as connections to the monarchy, the Yahwist conducted his work (editing) in the exile, seeking an answer to the abrupt change in the fate of the nation, and looking forward to a time when יהוה will once again restore his people.[26]

This reframing of the J source within exilic times has been simultaneously met with pushback. Westermann cautions against Van Seters' exilic conclusions, especially those that seek to find the meaning of the Yahwist's work solely in its meaning to its contemporaries, and those that argue based off of limited features in the text:

> One must say here that the view of Van Seters, setting the Yahwist in the exile, is extremely improbable; and for all that, the contemporary message is uncertain because it can rely only on elements in the narratives, not the narratives as wholes. A narrative is not a text, however it may confront us as a text in its present form. It is something that was narrated and the narration was listened to.[27]

Emerton also notes a word of caution against using the similarities between Babylonian myths and the primeval narratives of Genesis to date J to exilic times by arguing that such an adaptation of the literature of Israel's conquerors is less likely than the scenario of earlier Mesopotamian influence on Canaanite scribes which then emerged in later Israelite texts.[28] In addition, Emerton identifies several elements of the J narrative, such as the relatively positive portrayal of Esau, as

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[25] Van Seters, "Dating the Yahwist's History," 2. For a response and evaluation of some of Van Seters' conclusions, see Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 225–33.

[26] Christoph Levin, "The Yahwist: The Earliest Editor in the Pentateuch," *JBL* 126.2 (2007): 230; Alastair G. Hunter, "Father Abraham: A Structural and Theological Study of the Yahwist's Presentation of the Abraham Material," *JSOT* 11.35 (1986): 3–27. Hunter also reverses the arguments used by Asen and argues a dependency on prophetic passages such as Amos by the J editor and not vice versa. See Hunter, "Father Abraham," 17.

[27] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 46.

[28] Emerton, "The Date of the Yahwist," 123–24.

ancestor of the Edomites, and Laban the Aramaean that militate against an exilic date.[29] Whybray similarly cautions against Van Seters' view, that the Pentateuch is the result of a single exilic "J" author, by highlighting that the arguments put forward by him are highly subjective and not carried to their logical conclusions.[30] It is however worth noting that Whybray's own conclusion to the authorship of the Pentateuch, in its attribution to a single author/editor, bears remarkable similarity to Van Seters' overall paradigm and lies open to a similar charge.[31]

Contrarily, Nicholson firmly rejects the notion of an exilic date for the authorship of J, citing a lack of uncertainty about the future of Israel and the apparent missing dimension of trauma in the narratives.[32] Moreover, he argues that other features of the text, such as the legitimization of holy places in Israel by the patriarchs, fit far better in a pre-exilic context.[33] Nevertheless, there are aspects of J's theology that do seem to involve a deep wrestling with this trauma, the Genesis 3 expulsion from the garden not the least of them. This can be demonstrated from the following comparison: If one were to simply trace the historical pattern of Israel through the lens of the Deuteronomic historian (Joshua through 2 Kings) where the overall question being asked is, "how did the exile happen?" one sees that the answer given is: "disobedience to יהוה's commands." From the perspective of this exilic writer/editor, Israel was given the land and a law to follow, but Israel violated the law and was expelled from the land to Babylon in the "east." This pattern is remarkably similar to the overall narrative of Genesis 2–3 where the man and his wife are given the garden and a command, but after violating the

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[29] Emerton, "The Date of the Yahwist," 127. It is worth noting, however, that such portrayals could also have been pre-J narratives that the J writer was simply passing on.

[30] Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 232.

[31] Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 242.

[32] Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen*, 171. See also Emerton, "The Date of the Yahwist," 127.

[33] Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen*, 239–40.

command find themselves expelled from the garden, ostensibly to the "east."[34] Consequently, it is also worth stating that if Baden's arguments for the consistency of the J narrative are to be taken seriously, then more thought needs to be put into the legitimate possibility of an exilic context for its composition given the powerful explanatory power of the exile for certain features of the text. This would include the expulsion from the garden in Genesis 3, as well as the parallels between the flood accounts in Genesis and similar Babylonian myths; though the latter could be explained via Canaanite intermediaries as Emerton suggests.[35] Moreover, although Nicholson raises a valid point regarding how the majority of exilic texts come at the trauma from a direction of uncertainty for the future, which is arguably a view that one could get from reading just Genesis 2–3, is it necessary that all texts held the same view? Or is it not possible that some chose to encourage their contemporaries by way of a cultural retelling of ancient memories in order to point to a brighter future? This latter aspect is a view that one gets when Genesis 2–3 is put in the context of the rest of the narrative, where something terrible has happened, but the story is still going on. These connections and similarities are not, however, without other possible answers, though some sort of exilic context for the composition of Genesis 2–3, be it

[34] Genesis 3 portrays the sword and cherubim which guard re-entry back into the garden as being placed on the east side of the garden, which would indicate that this is the direction they were expelled. It should be noted that I have not found גרשׁ, the verb used when Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden, used in reference to the exile. However, it is used in several passages throughout Exodus, Joshua, and Judges to describe what God does to the native inhabitants of the land, including Exodus 33:2; 34:11 which Noth classifies as J. While not a direct reference to the exile, this connection could be relevant when taken within the mindset of Deuteronomy that if Israel does not follow all of יהוה's decrees, he will do to them as he did to the nations in the land before them. This in turn could strengthen Van Seters' contention that J was written as a pre-lude to Deuteronomy.

[35] It is also possible that the overall structure of the Genesis 2–3 narratives owes its origin not to the exile, but to a pre-exilic time as almost a warning of what will occur if the commands are not obeyed, although this is admittedly a weaker argument. Perhaps it is possible to envision a hybrid thesis where Genesis 2 owes its origin as a pre-exilic origins myth (Hiebert points out that many elements of Genesis 2 match what would have been common way of thinking about agricultural life in biblical Israel) to which the expulsion of Genesis 3 was later added after the trauma of the exile. See Theodore Hiebert, "Israel's Ancestors Were Not Nomads," in *Exploring the Longue Durée : Essays in Honor of Lawrence E. Stager*, ed. J. David Schloen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 200. Another possibility is explored by Wifall in his comparison of various elements of the primeval narratives to the life of David. See Walter R. Wifall, "Bone of My Bones and Flesh of My Flesh: The Politics of the Yahwist," *CurTM* 10.3 (1983): 176–183.

northern or southern exile, would offer a cogent explanation for these features of the text. Suffice it to say they cannot simply be ignored.

Baden cogently expresses one final note of review on J's historical context, which was also touched on in the above section: "The J document—like all the documents of the Pentateuch—is founded on a variety of traditions, some, if not all, of which were originally independent oral traditions."[36] This is important to keep in mind as it can often be simple in a discussion of a literary work's origin to forget that one is necessarily accessing a history of tradition through said literary work, even if that literary work may be the last link in a very long chain.[37] Indeed, Westermann holds that the written composition of the J narrative belongs to the latest stage in the development process of the Abrahamic narratives.[38] By this he does not mean that it is the latest source, but rather that it is in J that the narrative as it is now formed took shape from the pools of oral history behind it. In his view, P is then seen as evidence of later development of the tradition in the exile, although he also admits to probable later exilic editing of J (and E) material as well.[39] This is all to simply restate what has been said above: the J source, though a contiguous narrative, also bears elements from previous times as well as the

[36] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 81. See also Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 302; Rad, *Genesis*, 25; Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), xvii; Wolfgang M. W. Roth, "Wooing of Rebekah: A Tradition-Critical Study of Genesis 24," *CBQ* 34.2 (1972): 179–80. Weisman also argues that J, "…has operated not only as an author but also as a redactor, revising and adapting the work of others." See Zeev Weisman, "National Consciousness in the Patriarchal Promises," *JSOT* 10.31 (1985): 61. For more on the oral backdrop of the narratives, see also Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 35–58.

[37] One such example, although outside the purview of the current study, is much of the Jacob material, which Weisman argues is possibly one of the clearest examples of a pre-Yahwistic stratum that has been adapted and taken up by other sources such as J. See Weisman, "National Consciousness in the Patriarchal Promises," 63–64. Weisman bases his argumentation on the fact that only one of the promises made to Jacob in the narrative are attributed to יהוה, with the rest being attributed to other lesser used divine titles (such as El Bethel in Genesis 31:13 and 35:7).

[38] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 38.

[39] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 38–39. See also Emerton, "The Date of the Yahwist," 108.

marks of later editors. This reality makes it quite difficult to pin down a date with any relative certainty.

Textual Context of the J Source

In the Pentateuch, the J source begins with a creation account in Genesis 2. In the Abrahamic narratives, the J account begins with a brief introduction to Abraham in 11:28–30, immediately after the Tower of Babel incident in Genesis 11:1–9. In his commentary on Genesis, Westermann views the introductory Abrahamic call and blessing of Genesis 12:1–4a as shaped by the J editor in order to link it to the primeval narrative and the dispersion of the nations in Genesis 11:1–9 at the Tower of Babel.[40] Although there is a difference of terminology in some regards between the primeval and ancestral narratives (for example: כל-הארץ and בני האדם in the Babel narrative, and כל משפחת אדמה in Gen 12:3) this does not necessarily preclude this connection because, as noted above, J may be more of an editor combining pre-existing sources rather than an outright author.[41] Hamilton similarly links the "making great of Abram's name" as a direct antithesis to the Babel narrative in the preceding chapter in which the people of the earth sought to make famous their own name apart from God.[42] Baden takes this link a step further with his view that the entirety of J's primeval narrative was written to explain God's choice of

[40] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 146.

[41] In regards to this specific instance of different terminology it could be that in using כל משפחת אדמה the J editor is intentionally desiring to echo that אדם was taken from the אדמה, and as such the call of Abraham is the beginning of the reversal of the curse in Genesis 3:17. I am indebted to my thesis advisor Dr. Craig Broyles for pointing this out.

[42] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 1–17*, 372.

Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3.[43] The J source then continues throughout the rest of the Pentateuch, with the exception of course of Deuteronomy.[44]

Occurrences of Outsiders in the J Source

The accounts of outsiders' depiction and interaction with Abraham and יהוה in the ancestral narratives are surprisingly positive. Though there is definite preferential treatment of Abraham by יהוה, this treatment does not prevent him from also showing concern for outsiders, a concern that is also occasionally demonstrated by Abraham.

Genesis 12:1–4a: Abraham's Calling

Portrayal of Outsiders

First, I shall attempt to treat with the most prominent instance in the Abrahamic narratives to deal with outsiders: the Abrahamic promises occurring in Genesis 12:1–4a, and by association Genesis 18:18.[45] This passage is often viewed as the foundation of Israel's election, and its importance and indeed controversy cannot be understated. It is important because of the linkage drawn between the patriarchs, Israel, and the nations and controversial due to the translation of one word in Genesis 12:3: וְנִבְרְכוּ.

[43] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 69.

[44] Noth does classify some verses at the end of Deuteronomy as being of J/E providence, but on the whole Deuteronomy is seen as its own source.

[45] Genesis 18:18 will not be dealt with directly, but in tandem with Genesis 12:3b as the message behind them is the same, and the textual issues which follow (mainly the discussion on the meaning of the niphal) similarly apply, though a discussion on Genesis 18 at large will occur below.

Text:

> The Lord said to Abram, "Get up and go from your land and from your relations and from the house of your father to the land which I will show you. For I will make you to [become] a great nation and I shall bless you and I shall make your name great and it [shall] be a blessing.[46] And I shall bless the ones blessing you and the one slandering you I will curse; and all the families of the ground shall bless themselves in you[r name]. So Abram went just as the Lord had spoken to him. And Lot went with him.[47]

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ׃
וְאֶעֶשְׂךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וַאֲבָרֶכְךָ וַאֲגַדְּלָה שְׁמֶךָ וֶהְיֵה בְּרָכָה׃
וַאֲבָרֲכָה מְבָרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלֶּלְךָ אָאֹר וְנִבְרְכוּ בְךָ כֹּל מִשְׁפְּחֹת הָאֲדָמָה׃
וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו יְהוָה וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לוֹט

(Genesis 12:1–4a)

As stated, the first mention of "outsiders" in the Abrahamic narratives of Genesis 12–25 is in this Abrahamic blessing, in Genesis 12:3a, where יהוה declares that others can receive his favour, or displeasure, dependent upon their treatment of Abraham: "And I shall bless the ones blessing you and the one slandering you I will curse." This verse continues a blessing of Abraham that starts with him and expands in concentric circles to those around him. It is interesting that the first depiction in the Abrahamic narratives of outsiders is defined by how they place themselves in relationship to Abraham, upon whom God's favour resides. If they choose to bless him, then just as יהוה blessed Abraham, so too he will bless them.

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[46] See below for discussion on this text critical issue.

[47] All translations are the Author's unless otherwise indicated. Since all translation is interpretation, it must be noted that my translation already betrays which direction I am leaning as to the interpretation of this passage. Although the translation may sound wooden and awkward to the English ear, it accurately reflects the word order of the Hebrew.

"And I shall bless the ones blessing you and the one slandering you I will curse;"

וַאֲבָרְכָה מְבָרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלֶּלְךָ אָאֹר

(Genesis 12:3a)

This statement of blessing is also the first part of a Hebrew chiastic statement (וַאֲבָרֲכָה מְבָרֲכֶיךָ וּמְקַלֶּלְךָ אָאֹר) that also appears, though in slightly different form and order, in Genesis 27:29 and Numbers 24:9.[48] It follows a verbal pattern of imperfect to participle, which is mirrored in the subsequent section. Here the blessing is shared with others only as they themselves participate in and recognize Abraham's blessing. The blessing for them is a consequence of their antecedent blessing of Abraham. However, just as יהוה becomes the direct agent of Abraham's blessing, so is he also the direct agent of blessing those that bless Abraham, as opposed the more general statements later in Genesis and Numbers.

וַאֲבָרְכָה　　אָאֹר

מְבָרְכֶיךָ　←→　וּמְקַלֶּלְךָ

However, in the second half of the chiasm, a promise is stated that is possibly much darker than the first half. While blessing was offered to those blessing Abraham in what appears as almost some sort of equivalency principle, the consequences of cursing him do not follow the same logic. Whereas the first half of the chiasm used the same verb in the imperfect as it did in the participle, the second half diverges from that pattern and uses a different verb to describe the response of יהוה to those slandering Abraham. Wenham argues that this occurs in order to heighten the cursing aspect. He contends that קלל, the verb of which Abraham is the object, is more of a slanderous lessening of stature through verbal disdain. In contrast, ארר, of which those

[48] Both of which are traditionally attributed to the J or Yahwist source.

slandering Abraham are the object, is more a judicial curse on evildoers.[49] Both convey a sense of "to curse" in English, but with a distinct nuance and emphasis in each case.

In this way יהוה not only implies a state of protection over Abraham, but he also seemingly passes judgement on all who slander Abraham. It is curious that this proclamation only takes into account the actions of the outsider with no bearing on how Abraham conducts himself towards them, whether to merit blessing or cursing, something that becomes particularly relevant in the story of Abraham's interactions in Egypt.[50] As a result, this portion of the text is relatively neutral towards outsiders and allows their treatment to be determined by how they treat Abraham.

Of note is also the switch from the plural to the singular in וּמְקַלֶּלְךָ אָאֹר. While several other ancient versions such as the Vulgate, Syriac, Targum, several Hebrew manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the LXX render the verb in the plural, the Leningrad codex contains the singular. Wolff comments that the singular should be given preference over the plural as the

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[49] See Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 276–77. For more on this verse, see Patrick D. Miller, "Syntax and Theology in Genesis 12:3a," *VT* 34.4 (1984): 472–476; Wolff, "Kerygma of the Yahwist," 143–44. It is of note that Wenham and the ESV make this distinction, given other translations' (NRSV, NIV, NASB, etc.) decision to simply render קלל as "curse" (although the NASB does include a note that it may also be translated "revile"). Westermann, though he does not comment on the translation directly, does indicate a different nuance between the two verbs. He appears to translate קלל as "curse" but chooses to translate ארר as "execrate (bring low)." See Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 144, 148–49. See also Lohr who argues there is a difference between the two verbs here, Joel N. Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen: Conceptions of Election in the Pentateuch and Jewish-Christian Interpretation* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 111–13. Wenham backs his translation with reference to the usage of קלל in Exodus 21:17, Leviticus 24:11, 2 Samuel 16:5–13, among other numerous passages, where he argues it covers "illegitimate verbal assaults on God or one's superiors." See Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 276. Of note is that there are six instances in the LXX where קלל in the piel is translated by κακολογεω, "to speak ill of/revile," which would lend support to Wenham's case. However, the vast majority of the usages of קלל in the piel are translated by καταράομαι, "curse," including this instance in Genesis 12:3. Interestingly the LXX uses the same word to translate ארר in this verse, seemingly finding no difference between the two in this context, which supports modern translations that also do so. Nevertheless, I believe that Wenham's argument does have merit given that the majority of usages of קלל in the piel do indeed occur in a context that better fits slander or "disdain" (possibly as a subset of cursing) as opposed to a more general "curse". This is in addition to the reality that rather than simply using ארר (or even קלל) twice as is the case in other similar statements in Genesis 27:29 and Numbers 24:9, the author/editor/scribe chose to use two different verbs, a choice which also makes the chiasm less "complete." This could indicate that there was a deliberate desire to draw out some nuance between the two verbs.

[50] A similar point is made by Lohr in reference to the Abimelech episode in Genesis 20. See Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 112–13.

plural can be explained as a textual assimilation to the first part of the chiasm which is in the plural.[51] If the singular is the original, יהוה could be making an implicit contrast similar to the one in the Ten Words in Exodus 34:6–7 (NRSV): [52]

> The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

Consequently, the change to the singular may be to show a preference to bless many contrasted to a desire to curse one.[53] Wenham also notes that it may also be an indication that those who bless Abraham will be far greater in number than those who curse him, thereby demonstrating the extent of his promised blessing.[54]

The second half of Genesis 12:3, in large part on account of the meaning of the niphal form of ברך, is a portion of text that has puzzled and divided scholars like few others. To some, it is merely an issue of syntax; to others it is an issue that puts our understanding of the purpose for God's people in jeopardy. Will all the nations be blessed through Abraham, or will he simply become famous?

> "And all the families of the ground shall bless themselves in [or by] you[r name]."
>
> וְנִבְרְכוּ בְךָ֖ כֹּ֣ל מִשְׁפְּחֹ֣ת הָאֲדָמָֽה׃
>
> (Genesis 12:3b)

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[51] Wolff, "Kerygma of the Yahwist," 139 n. 34.

[52] Also classified as J by Noth.

[53] I am indebted to my thesis advisor Dr. Craig Broyles for pointing this out.

[54] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 277. See also Wolff, "Kerygma of the Yahwist," 144.

At issue is the translation of the niphal וְנִבְרְכוּ, often translated either "be blessed," or "bless themselves."[55] The subject of the verb is כֹּל מִשְׁפְּחֹת הָאֲדָמָה (all the families of the earth) with resulting translations of either a passive nature: "all the families of the earth will be blessed in you;" or of a reflexive nature: "all the families of the earth will bless themselves in you." At issue is not only an understanding of the niphal, but also of the hithpael, for this passage is made more difficult by a similar declaration made in Genesis 22:18,[56] and 26:4,[57] but using the hithpael instead of the niphal.

There have been three past roads of interpretation as laid out by Wenham in his commentary. The first is that it is to be taken in a passive sense: "be blessed", which is found in the LXX, *Tg. Ong., Vg,* Sirach 44:21, Acts 3:25, Galatians 3:8, KJV, NIV, NASB, ESV*,* and among scholars such as Waltke, Konig, Jacob, Cassuto, and Gispen. The second is that it is to be taken in the middle sense: "find blessing for themselves", which is found in the NAB, and among scholars such as Procksch, Keller, Schreiner, Wolff, and Schmidt. Finally, it can be taken in the reflexive sense: "bless themselves", which is found in the RSV, NEB*,* a textual note in the NRSV, and among scholars such as Speiser, Delitzsch, Skinner, Gunkel, and Westermann.[58] All

[55] It is possible that an accurate translation of the hithpael could also be: "all the nations of the earth make themselves blessed in you." This would equate to the middle sense as will be seen below. For a description of how the relation between the different stems plays out, see Bruce K. Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 3rd, corr. print ed. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 354–58. Waltke contrasts the hithpael with the niphal by the following means: "the reflexive sense in [the niphal] involves a happening but in [the hithpael] it denotes an achieved state." See Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 357. He contends, with Bean, that the hithpael developed from its original meaning as a reflexive into more of a passive stem as time passed. See Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 429.

[56] Traditionally attributed to the E or Elohist source.

[57] Traditionally attributed to the J or Yahwist source, although von Rad hints that the older J material was expanded on by a later hand. See Rad, *Genesis*, 30.

[58] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 277. In regards to interpreting it in the reflexive sense versus the middle see Muilenburg, "Abraham and the Nations," 392–93. Muilenberg states that, "[w]hile an absolute decision is difficult, it is wise to follow the majority of scholars and interpret the verb reflexively." Nevertheless, he then interprets it as a middle, attempting to preserve both the passive implication of a conduit of blessing as well as the reflexive sense.

three of these stances present a wide variety of evidences to back up their position, and suffice it to say there is much good scholarship behind the three options.

I submit that a possible solution to this diverse range of opinions can be found by seeing this passage through a source-critical lens. When Genesis 12:1–4a is taken as its own kernel of tradition (as in a kernel that was later taken up into the J narrative), it seems to indicate a reflexive meaning of the niphal in this passage that subsequently shifted to the passive, possibly around the time of the compilation of Genesis, when the Abrahamic narratives are paired with the primeval histories.

The difference between the two theologically is that in the case of the passive, Abraham is seen as the conduit of blessing for "all the families of the ground," versus the reflexive whereas Abraham is a byword of blessing, to the effect of others invoking his name as a blessing.[59] While in my contention the passive fits well as a bridge with the primeval narratives, Lohr contrarily argues that the nifal must be read in the larger context of the Genesis where the reflexive meaning bears more weight in his view. For example, in Abraham's interaction with Abimelech in Genesis 20 (it should be noted that Lohr is seeking to define the usage of a verb in what is traditionally a J passage based on what is traditionally an E text) he argues that Abimelech is clearly not a passive participant in the process, but only finds blessing based on his treatment of Abraham.[60] Williamson, quoting Wehmeier, however, argues that it is the passive interpretation which fits more with the grand narrative of the text, where the focus is not solely

[59] It is worth mentioning that it is possible to still see Abraham as a conduit of blessing in the reflexive in the sense that he becomes the one in which people make blessings. This is demonstrated by Rotenberry, although it is important to note that he is dealing with issues of inspiration and trying to find an "authentic" or "pure" reading. In this present study, this is an issue that I am distinctly trying to avoid by instead focusing more on the process of reinterpretation rather than trying to isolate an "original" kernel. See Paul Rotenberry, "Blessing in the Old Testament: A Study of Genesis 12:3," *ResQ* 2.1 (1958): 32–33.

[60] Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 112–13.

on Abraham's blessing, but is expanding to also encompass the blessing of others.[61] This also fits with the overall direction of J's portrayal of outsiders in which they are still favoured despite the clear preference for the chosen. The difference in the larger argument of this thesis is that outsiders are either a passive participant in a blessing that will flow through Abraham to them, or they are an active participant in the process, which fits with my previously stated interpretation of the first half of the verse which will be further discussed below.

Perhaps here there needs to be inserted into the discussion an analysis of the second imperative of Genesis 12:1–3, והיה, in v. 2d.[62] As it stands in the MT the text is pointed as וֶהְיֵה, an imperative commanding Abraham to be a blessing. However, *BHS* proposes that instead this should be read as וְהָיָה, which could make Abraham's name from the previous clause the subject of the verb, stating that an emphatic consequence of יהוה's making great the name will be its usage as a blessing.[63] In my translation above, I am following an interpretation that recognizes this proposed pointing by *BHS*. It is, however, worth noting that a similar force can be achieved with the text as it is pointed in the MT by recognizing the imperative as an "emphatic consequence clause" rather than a simple imperative. Gesenius notes that an imperative following a cohortative "frequently expresses also a consequence which is to be expected with certainty," and cites as an example this verse.[64] This option is also pointed out by Williamson,

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[61] Paul R. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and Its Covenantal Development in Genesis*, JSOTSup 315 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 225–26.

[62] For a discussion on this see also Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 221–23.

[63] As noted by Wenham, this is also supported by Skinner, Gunkel, and Speiser. See Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 266.

[64] Friedrich Heinrich Wilhelm Gesenius, Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley, and Emil Friedrich Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar as Edited and Enlarged by the Late E. Kautzsch... Second English Edition, Revised in Accordance with the Twenty-Eighth German Edition (1909) by A. E. Cowley. With a Facsimile of the Siloam Inscription by J. Euting, and a Table of Alphabets by M. Lidzbarski* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 325.

though he disagrees, and supported by Wenham, on the basis of Joüon and Gesenius.[65] Williamson strongly contends that the text should be read as pointed by the MT, which is as an imperative, though this does not address the above raised points regarding its interpretation following a cohortative.[66] He supports this by also arguing that if read as an imperative, both imperatives in Gen 12:1–4a are followed by cohortatives, which would provide a sort of literary symmetry.[67] An emphatic consequence clause stresses that Abraham, or his name, will be a blessing, which lends weight to the reflexive translation of Gen 12:3b, while a simple imperative commands Abraham to himself be a blessing, which more directly supports the passive/middle options in interpreting Gen 12:3b. A similar example of one's name becoming a blessing occurs in Genesis 48:20, where Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh saying, "By you Israel will invoke blessings, saying, 'God make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh.'" (NRSV)[68]

If this statement of blessing simply occurred multiple times in the niphal, then it would be less of an issue; however, similar statements also appear in the hithpael in Genesis 22:18,[69] and 26:4,[70] where it would be natural to interpret the hithpael as reflexive, giving some credence to the notion that the niphal here is also reflexive.[71] Indeed, Westermann states that, "the parallels in Genesis are so alike … that once again one must agree with F. Delitzsch that the niph. and the

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[65] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 221–23; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 266. Wenham cites Joüon, section 116h, and Gesenius 110i. The LXX also translates the verb as a 2nd person singular future indicative (ἔσῃ), thus supporting the emphatic consequence translation of the verb, though it translates בְּרָכָה as an adjective rather than a noun, thus referring to Abraham's status as "being blessed" rather than being a "blessing."

[66] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 222.

[67] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 222.

[68] Genesis 48:20 is classified as the E source according to Noth. See also Numbers 6:27, and Isaiah 65:16 where the divine name is used as a blessing, and a similar situation of blessing expressed in Psalm 72:17.

[69] Traditionally attributed to the E or Elohist source.

[70] Traditionally attributed to the J or Yahwist source.

[71] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 277.

hitp. have the same meaning in this group of passages."[72] However, it is also possible that each source (E, and J) varied the stem in order to provide a different nuance which they wished to convey.

An Excursus on the Niphal Verbal Stem with Reflection on Its Usage in Genesis Blessings

The issue is further complicated because there is as much division in scholars' view of the niphal in general as there is on the meaning of the niphal in this passage. For instance, Hamilton states that the niphal is primarily reflexive, as do Joüon and Muraoka, and Gesenius, although both note it is also often passive. Wenham views it in its most basic sense as medio-passive, and Lee, on the basis of Grüneberg, holds that the niphal is mainly middle or passive and rarely reflexive, as does Waltke.[73] Gesenius attributes the passive usage of the niphal to a "looseness of thought at an early period of the language," although the passive use is "…nevertheless quite secondary to the reflexive use."[74] Moreover, the hithpael, which as noted is used in subsequent examples of this blessing, is only rarely passive.[75]

It is possible that the niphal in this passage is in the category of "niphal tolerativum" outlined by Joüon and Muraoka,[76] as this would accommodate both a participatory action by the subject and the effective action of being blessed. However, this does not seem to be overly satisfactory in the immediate context of the passage as it does not fit well with the usage of the

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[72] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 151.

[73] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 1–17*, 374; Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, SubBi 27 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2006), 138; Gesenius, Cowley, and Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 137; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 277; Chee-Chiew Lee, "Once Again: The Niphal and the Hithpael of ברך in the Abrahamic Blessing for the Nations," *JSOT* 36.3 (2012): 284; Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 382.

[74] Gesenius, Cowley, and Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 138.

[75] Gesenius, Cowley, and Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 150.

[76] Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 139.

verb, nor does it make the participation by the subject anything more than mere permission, something that does not fit with the notion of using Abraham's name as a blessing.

Baden argues that this phrase occurs in both the niphal and the hithpael because they share a semantic overlap in the reflexive sense with some verbs.[77] Consequently, the author, redactor, or scribes responsible for passing on the tradition did not see a conflict between the two stems because they were seen at the time to share the same meaning. A shared meaning which, in this case, emerged as a result of an increasing regularity of the reflexive "…within the semantic field of the niphal, such that it became possible for the niphal to become a productive reflexive stem in some cases."[78] However, the issue is further complicated by the trend in later history to identify the meanings in these passages as passive, as is seen for example in the LXX. This in turn would indicate another swing in the perception of the niphal as a passive stem, at least specifically in this instance.

It seems that scholars are coming at this from various angles and, at least to me, the problem with understanding the niphal could be similar to the problem with understanding this passage: it is possible that the meaning of the niphal shifted as time went on and the language developed. Indeed, Rotenberry held that the earliest force of the niphal was reflexive, which would make sense in this passage of one way in which the meaning has shifted regarding the blessing of Abraham.[79] Waltke and O'Connor also cite an interesting example in parallel passages of 2 Samuel 10:6 and 1 Chronicles 19:6 where a niphal was used in the earlier text and then replaced by a hithpael in the latter:[80]

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[77] Joel S. Baden, "Hithpael and Niphal in Biblical Hebrew: Semantic and Morphological Overlap," *VT* 60.1 (2010): 36–37.

[78] Baden, "Hithpael and Niphal in Biblical Hebrew," 43–44.

[79] Rotenberry, "Blessing in the Old Testament," 34.

[80] Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 391.

וַיִּרְאוּ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן כִּי נִבְאֲשׁוּ בְּדָוִד

2 Samuel 10:6

וַיִּרְאוּ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן כִּי הִתְבָּאֲשׁוּ עִם־דָּוִיד

1 Chronicles 19:6

This is of particular interest because it could demonstrate an evolution in the language where the hithpael came to be seen as the defacto reflexive stem. A similar development is also attested by Westermann, who holds that the promise of a blessing (in terms of being blessed in the future rather than the immediate present) contained in Genesis 12:1–3 is an original contribution by the Yahwist, but contains within it a blessing which is linked to the patriarchal period.[81]

However, if this is the case, then larger questions of the dating of these passages still loom. If, as I am suggesting here, the niphal in Genesis 12:3, as contained in the J source and in contrast to the hithpael of Genesis 22:18 in the E source and 26:4 in the J source,[82] was originally reflexive and is the older of the examples, this would indicate that the J source is earlier than the E source, or at the very least the E source's language was updated at some point. Yet, if Van Seters' arguments regarding the dating of J, and Genesis 22:18 being J rather than E, are to be given credence, then the question remains as to why J would use the niphal one place and the hithpael in another.

I would argue that whatever the "original" meaning of the niphal was, as will still be discussed below, that from at least when Genesis 12:1–3 was attached to the primeval narratives and onwards it is very clearly interpreted in a way that emphasizes the passive sense (LXX, Jer 4:2, *Tg. Ong., Vg,* Sirach 44:21, Acts 3:25, Galatians 3:8), as this passage is framed as the answer to the dispersion of the nations in the primeval narratives.

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[81] Westermann cites as an example the blessing in Genesis 27 which has an immediate sense rather than the way the blessing has been transformed in Genesis 12:1–3. See Claus Westermann, *The Promises to the Fathers: Studies on the Patriarchal Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 113–14.

[82] Noth marks 26:4 as J, but Eissfeldt marks it as E. Wenham also notes that though 26:4 is often attributed to J, it is also argued that it is a later addition, which would fit well with the shift to the hithpael in later passages. See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, vol. 2 of *WBC* (Nashville: Nelson, 1994), 188.

Nevertheless, based on the first half of verse three, it would seem that the reflexive meaning is the more natural rendering when this passage is interpreted as a stand-alone kernel because although Abraham is indeed a sort of conduit, those who wish to receive blessing through him must in some sense participate in the process. As was seen above, this raises linguistic questions regarding why the niphal is used. If the desire was to indeed communicate the reflexive idea, then why is the hithpael not used as it is in similar passages? It is possible that the two were interchangeable in meaning, as pointed out by Joüon and Muraoka (and also argued by Baden): "The majority of the meanings of the Nifal are naturally shared by the hithpael, which is the reflexive conjugation of the piel."[83] However, as was noted above, the niphal does at times have a passive function.[84] Similarly, if the intent was to clearly portray a passive meaning, then why the switch to the hithpael in other comparative passages? Unfortunately, it seems that these questions are not likely to be answered beyond any doubt any time soon, as the evidence is too sparse, although certain conjectures are possible.

An added issue is the subsequent vocabulary of the blessing statements. While the three occurrences in the niphal have either כֹּל מִשְׁפְּחֹת הָאֲדָמָה or כֹּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ as the subject and the two hithpael have כֹּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ, it is only Genesis 28:14, the last of the niphal occurrences in the J account, that contains וּבְזַרְעֶךָ as an added object to the other niphal occurrences that contain solely Abraham as an indirect object of the blessing. That Abraham's seed is contained at the end of the clause is in contrast to the hithpael accounts where it is Abraham's seed and not him that is the sole indirect object of the blessing. This has led some scholars, such as Rendtorff, to posit that this was a later insertion meant to harmonize at least one of the niphal occurrences with the

[83] Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 140.

[84] Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 138.

hithpael ones, which he holds are later examples of the blessing formula.[85] While Emerton admits that וּבְזַרְעֶךָ was likely an addition, he does not grant Rendtorff's reasoning for its addition, citing other occurrences of Abraham's seed in the chapter as more probable.[86] However, Rendtorff's thesis has some measure of explanatory power if one posits that the niphal occurrences in J are earlier than the hithpael occurrences in E, and that when J and E were combined, וּבְזַרְעֶךָ was added to link the two similar Abrahamic promises of the two narratives.

Overall, how outsiders are portrayed in this passage varies slightly depending on one's interpretation of the niphal in Genesis 12:3b. On the one hand, this verse is the beacon of hope that it is made out to be in later translations and traditions, with Abraham being the defacto gateway through which יהוה's eventual blessing of all nations flows, regardless of how they position themselves in relationship to Abraham. Or, on the other hand, Abraham becomes at least a byword of blessing used to wish one's own good fortune and at most someone who blessing will flow through dependent upon how one positions themselves in relationship with him. In reference to the first instance, Abraham, and subsequently Israel, becomes the mediator of blessing to the nations. In support of this Fretheim notes the following:

> For the Yahwist this concern [of how Israel might mediate the blessing] comes into play whenever the patriarchs come into contact with foreigners. It is especially striking that these foreigners are usually ancestors of peoples now subject to the Davidic crown, or peoples with whom the crown has close dealings (Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Aramaeans, Philistines, Egyptians). While occasionally the patriarchs conduct themselves in such a way as to mediate a curse upon these peoples (e.g., 12:10–20), normally their actions (seek to) mediate blessing (in which contexts Gen. 12:3 is sometimes repeated, e.g., 18:16–33). In each of these instances the Yahwist seems to be suggesting how (or how not!) his contemporaries might take up their mediatorial responsibilities.[87]

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[85] Rendtorff, "The 'Yahwist' as Theologian," 7–8.

[86] Graham Davies and Robert Gordon, eds., *Studies on the Language and Literature of the Bible: Selected Works of J.A. Emerton*, vol. 165 of *VTSup* (Boston: Brill, 2014), 483.

[87] Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 310.

Moreover, Benz also sees a "missional" component in Abraham's (and later Israel's) blessing: what is given for Abraham is not meant simply as a reward, but is also meant for the benefit of other nations.[88] It may also be possible that the author/editor/scribe used or left the niphal to intentionally leave a tension in the text. In this view, God is clearly the ultimate source of blessing, and the ultimate result of the blessing is intended to be for the benefit of the "families of the earth"; yet at the same time the reception of this blessing is clearly in some manner based on how "the families of the earth" position themselves in relationship to Abraham.[89] As was noted above, in whatever manner the issue of translation of the niphal is resolved and what its "original" meaning is construed as, all indications point towards the blessing being used by the J editor in the middle sense at the least, if not assuredly in the passive sense, a view which persisted in later versions and quotations of this verse.

Source-Critical Discussion

The classification of this passage as J is almost universally agreed upon by scholars. However, what is not agreed upon is the relative dating of J, whether it is pre or post-exilic. While this dating does not change the message of this passage to outsiders within the J narrative, it does influence the linguistic elements of the passage.

An interesting aspect of this blessing is its connection to the monarchy. Not only are the terms of the blessing also applied to the Davidic king, but the blessing of Genesis 12:3b is an

[88] Frank L. Benz, "Was David's Theologian Concerned About Mission," *CurTM* 18.5 (1991): 365.

[89] I am indebted to my thesis advisor Dr. Craig Broyles for this possibility. He noted that the sentence structure makes clear יהוה's agency in the blessing (cf. Isaiah 65:16 where the reflexive hithpael is used but God is clearly the source of the blessing) as v.3b is a subordinate/dependent clause to v.3a and forms the ultimate result of יהוה's blessing on Abraham.

echo of Psalm 72, itself a royal psalm.[90] Whether this usage of royal language is an indication of the time period within which this text is written is still open for debate. Some, such as Wolff, Westermann and Fretheim, hold that it points to the Davidic-Solomonic era, whereas Van Seters, and Williamson to an extent, holds that this is not necessarily the case, but agree that "the language used in this promise is drawn from royal ideology.[91] Indeed while both sides see Davidic/royal language being applied to Abraham, the main difference lies in when and why this language was applied. For example, Fretheim argues that the purpose of the association of royal themes with Abraham during the United Monarchy was to proclaim that God has been faithful to his promises to Israel and has been actively working on them throughout history in a way that is now fulfilled in the Davidic dynasty.[92] Van Seters on the other hand takes these connections, within his model of an exilic authorship of these verses, to be a democratization of the royal forms of speaking.[93] This transference of royal blessing language to Abraham then allows it to be applied more generally to the entire people of Israel. However, this argument is admittedly weaker than seeing these phrases originating from the time period of the monarchy when they would be much more applicable and relevant than when the "great nation" and "great name" has been nearly eradicated. At the very least, it is important to recognize that the text may be

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[90] For more on Psalm 72 and the connections between the monarchy and the Abrahamic promises, see Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 293–98. It is also worth noting that while "echo" implies that Genesis 12:3b is a derivation of sorts from Psalm72, it is possible to view the connection in the other direction.

[91] Wolff, "Kerygma of the Yahwist," 141–43; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 149–50; Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 253, 271–72; Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 231–32; Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 306. The quote is taken from Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 253.

[92] Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 306. For additional arguments regarding the association and its importance for J's audience in Fretheim's view, see Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 307.

[93] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 275. Römer also holds to a similar opinion that the royal language used is part of a democratization of royal ideology. See Thomas Römer, "Abraham's Righteousness and Sacrifice: How to Understand (and Translate) Genesis 15 and 22," *CV* 54.1 (2012): 11–12.

operating on two interpretive levels. There is the level of its usage as an ancestral story where Abraham is portrayed as only a semi-nomadic chieftain and the aspect of him becoming famous enough for "all the families of the earth" to bless themselves in his name is suspect. However, on the second level, when the story is read in reference to the Davidic monarchy, the contentions that יהוה will give Abraham a "great name" and make him into a "great nation" begin to be illuminated as either a declaration of hope for those in exile, or as a legitimation of the existent regime. It is also possible that such multivalence extends beyond the intended meaning by the author/editor(s) to the reception of these texts in different time periods. In this way, while the text may have been initially "relevant" to the "intended" audience (in the above example those in the monarchial period), it remains relevant to those who receive it later and adapt it to fit their own social context. In this case, this would extend to those in the exilic period who democratize royal forms in the absence of the monarchy. This dynamic not only enlivens the text for successive generations, but provides a cogent explanation as to why seemingly irrelevant elements of stories continue to be passed on in successive retellings and redactions. What remains to be determined is whether this second interpretive level is seen to be operative within the whole of the Patriarchal narratives, or just in this particular passage.

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

Whether this passage is dated to the exile or pre-exilic times, it demonstrates a remarkable outlook in which one of the fundamental aspects of Hebrew self-identity is that they are in some way to be a blessing to the nations, whether as a conduit or a byword. Such an outlook would be lost if this passage was merely seen as applying to Abraham and only tangentially to his later offspring.

Perhaps a more cohesive example of the value and possibility of diachronic analysis (though somewhat unrelated in that the two passages in question are not "sources" per se but rather examples of different narrative streams concerning roughly the same events) comes from our above comparison between 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles to show the development of language over time.

Finally, though it cannot definitively answer the question regarding the "original" meaning of the niphal in Genesis 12:3b, looking at the passage in the context of the rest of the J source does allow us to make an important point. Whatever the original meaning was, it is very clearly being used by the J author/editor to link the ancestral and the primeval narratives by setting up the election of Abraham as the answer to the curse of the ground and the dispersion of the nations. Moreover, viewing the passage through the framework of the Documentary Hypothesis allows the reader to explain how, although internal evidence within Genesis 12:1–3 points towards a reflexive interpretation, its usage in the larger narrative points towards the passive and/or middle sense. Such a realization would be lost were the text simply viewed from the synchronic level.

Genesis 12:10–20: Abraham's Descent to Egypt

Portrayal of Outsiders

The next occurrence of outsiders in the J narrative comes in Genesis 12:10–20 with Abraham's descent into Egypt because of a famine, an episode that in many regards contains echoes of the exodus. This story is one of three "matriarch in trouble" episodes within the ancestral stories of Genesis, and the first of two traditionally associated with the J source (the

second being between Isaac and Abimelech in Genesis 26). In this episode Abraham is depicted as very skeptical towards how the foreigners in Egypt will treat him because of Sarah's beauty, although in the end, Abraham is rewarded by the foreigners despite his deceit when he claims Sarah as his sister rather than wife.

Of interest to the topic at hand is despite Abraham's scheming and dishonesty for fear of his own life, יהוה brings to bear the protection promised to Abraham against the Egyptians. Pharaoh and his household are afflicted with plagues even though they possessed no knowledge of Sarah's true status as the wife of Abraham. The tone set by this episode is that the nature of the relationship between Abraham and outsiders is seemingly solely dependent upon their treatment of Abraham (which is in line with the blessing in Genesis 12:3a), even though sometimes that treatment is not evidently unjust in their eyes because of their ignorance regarding Abraham's actions. Indeed, from their perspective, they had dealt fairly with Abraham and provided him with gifts in compensation for taking Sarah to Pharaoh as seen in Genesis 12:16.

Interestingly, the LXX casts a slightly different light on the story than the MT.[94] Whereas in Genesis 12:17 the MT uses וַיִּנַּ֥ע יְהוָ֖ה, "יהוה struck or touched," the LXX instead uses καὶ ἤτασεν ὁ θεὸς, "God examined or tested." This strikes a different tone than that of the MT and points towards God's intervention to prevent Pharaoh from crossing a line that he could not come back from and thereby forcing God's hand in protection of Abraham's interests. While the MT seems to portray simple punishment that causes Pharaoh to change his mind and discover Abraham's ruse, the LXX demonstrates God's concern for the wellbeing of outsiders despite Abraham's deception of them, a similar occurrence to what happened between Isaac and

[94] For a discussion on the validity of contrasting the LXX with the MT, see Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 121–48; Matthew Thiessen, "The Text of Genesis 17:14," *JBL* 128.4 (2009): 627–28.

Abimelech in the other J episode of a matriarch in trouble, as well as between Abraham and Abimelech in Genesis 20.[95] Therefore, although the story does show God's primary concern is that of Abraham, this concern does not inhibit him from concern for outsiders.[96]

Source-Critical Discussion

While many scholars agree with Noth's classification of this passage as J, Van Seters views it as one of a few pre-J texts that are taken up by the exilic J author and inserted into his narrative.[97] Westermann similarly notes that this text is the earliest of the three sister-wife episodes, and that the second instance in J, Genesis 26, clearly presupposes this episode, which may lend weight to Van Seter's contention, although if they are both J stories this could also easily explain the connection.[98]

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

If this text is a pre-J tradition as Van Seters argues then perhaps it demonstrates that the depictions of God's care for outsiders emerged as a secondary characteristic for his care for his chosen people, although this is called into question by the LXX version of this narrative. At the very least, if this is an earlier tradition, it demonstrates that though outsiders were not disparaged,

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[95] It is possible then that the LXX translation is reflective of these later narratives and the translator's attempt to provide an explanation for the situation here in light of them.

[96] Of interest is also the depiction of this event in the *Genesis Apocryphon* (1QapGen). Here the focus is much more on filling in the gaps left in the biblical text and establishing a clear case that Sarah's virtue is left intact. As a result, the depiction of Pharaoh and other outsiders is markedly darker (Pharaoh is referred to as a "blasphemer") than the depiction in the MT and LXX. Abraham is also cast in a much more positive light, as his deception of Pharaoh is portrayed as being in response to a dream that Pharaoh would kill Abraham and take Sarah. For an English translation and brief commentary see Michael O. Wise, Martin G. Abegg Jr., and Edward M. Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, Revised Edition. (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 99–102. See also Daniel A. Machiela and Andrew B. Perrin, "Tobit and the Genesis Apocryphon: Toward a Family Portrait," *JBL* 133.1 (2014): 127–31.

[97] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 183; Van Seters, *The Pentateuch*, 127.

[98] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 161–62.

God is clearly portrayed as showing preference for his chosen people. This attitude could then have developed into the greater care shown in other J texts. Though that is a message that could be gleaned from the text simply through synchronic analysis, what could not be appreciated is the possibility that this attitude towards outsiders shifts into a more caring dynamic, despite preference still for the chosen.

Genesis 13: A Preamble to Sodom

Portrayal of Outsiders

The next area where the J narrative engages with outsiders is in Genesis 13:13 which serves as a preamble to the larger Sodom episode in chapters 18–19. This verse sets the stage by declaring to the reader that the people in these cities (the cities of the plain) were "…wicked, great sinners against the LORD."[99] Although this sets a negative tone towards these outsiders, the narrative does not elaborate any more at this time on their wickedness. It is not stated that they are wicked simply because they are outsiders, something that will be relevant upon examination of the Sodom episode below.

Source-Critical Discussion

This verse appears awkwardly in the chapter, with Westermann highlighting that it is not a continuation to the J narrative found here, but rather an introduction to a later narrative in chapters 18–19.[100]

[99] Genesis 13:13 NRSV

[100] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 178.

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

The value in diachronic analysis in this instance is to provide an answer to the awkward transition between vv. 13 and 14. Though it does seem like v. 13 could be a fitting connection between the separation of Lot and Abraham, it does not connect or flow well with the next verse where Abraham once again finds himself in dialogue with God. As a result, it is possible that it is a later gloss inserted into the narrative.

Genesis 16:1b–2, 4–14: Hagar's Expulsion

Portrayal of Outsiders

The next noteworthy account in the J narrative that deals with outsiders is the Hagar episode in Genesis 16:1b–2, 4–14. In this episode, although Hagar, an Egyptian slave, is mistreated by Sarah, she is shown a surprising amount of favor by יהוה. Unlike Sarah, who at this point in the narrative has not been addressed directly by יהוה or an angel, Hagar is spoken to directly in such an encounter that she is prompted to declare יהוה as the "God who sees," and that "she has seen the one who sees her," implying that she has seen יהוה. Westermann makes an interesting note that testifies to the personal nature of this naming (which is astounding given Hagar's virtual outsider status) when he comments, "That is not to say that Hagar gives to a hitherto nameless divine being a name that sticks to him everywhere and always; this is never so with a human being in the O.T., but Hagar says: 'For me he is, whatever else he may be called, the God who sees me…'"[101] The angel also declares over Hagar a promise of abundant offspring similar to that declared over Abraham. Although it is possible that the promise to Hagar comes

[101] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 247.

through her association with Abraham and bearing his child, therefore sharing in his promise of descendants, the story instead chooses to highlight that the reason for God's blessing of Hagar is that he has heard *her* suffering and is responding. Indeed, McEvenue notes that the usage of the verb מצא (to find), used here in verse 7, "when predicated of God, carries a technical meaning going well beyond connotations of the English verb: it includes elements of encounter and of divine election (cf. Deut 32:10; Ps 89:21; Hosea 12:5)."[102] This is reinforced in that the encounter is put forward as the reasoning for Ishmael's name (God hears). Again, that such care is shown by יהוה to an outsider is significant.

Source-Critical Discussion

McEvenue, while agreeing that the majority of the passage in question is J, does view vv. 9–10, which deal with the promise of abundant offspring, to come from a later hand in order to facilitate the inclusion of Genesis 21 in the overall narrative.[103] Westermann, while affirming that the passage is at its core part of J (which draws the story from oral tradition), holds that a redactor has joined it with vv. 1a, 3, 15–16 from P.[104] However, Wenham, following Van Seters among others, holds that assigning verses in this passage to P is not so sure as it once was and that the entire passage may be J based on the tight structural nature of the passage and the importance verses assigned to P actually play in the overall narrative.[105]

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[102] McEvenue, "Comparison of Narrative Styles in the Hagar Stories," 69.

[103] McEvenue, "Comparison of Narrative Styles in the Hagar Stories," 67–68.

[104] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 237.

[105] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 4–5.

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

Due to the large agreement of this passage being J (minus some minor detractors) the value of source analysis in this instance would only come when incorporating this passage into the larger picture of the J narrative and its historical context. The possibility that this passage was an early oral tradition that was then taken up into the J narrative does raise the intriguing notion that care for outsiders and otherwise less important "characters" was a prominent feature even among early, pre-textual, traditions.

Genesis 18–19: Entertaining Angels

Portrayal of Outsiders

The narratives of chapters 18–19 bear particular relevance for the topic at hand as they demonstrate a similar care shown by יהוה for Pharaoh in Genesis 12 (at least in the LXX translation), except this time through the character of Abraham towards those living in Sodom. The story begins in chapter 18 with Abraham demonstrating extreme hospitality towards three travelers. This hospitality is repeated later in the story by Lot and contains insight into insider-outsider relationships and how outsiders should be treated, seemingly no matter the cost, as demonstrated by Abraham's extravagant meal offering and Lot's seemingly abhorrent, to modern readers, offering of his daughters in exchange for the strangers' safety.[106]

[106] One could argue that the reason for the exceptional treatment of these particular outsiders is that they are recognized in the story as angels and therefore showed a much higher level of honour than would have been expected to ordinary strangers. However, this does not discount the role hospitality played in ancient cultures. For a brief overview of said hospitality see Stuart A. Irvine, "'Is Anything Too Hard for Yahweh?': Fulfillment of Promise and Threat in Genesis 18–19," *JSOT* 42.3 (2018): 295. For a treatment on biblical and ANE angelic appearances see Michael B. Hundley, "Of God and Angels: Divine Messengers in Genesis and Exodus in Their Ancient Near Eastern Contexts," *JTS* 67.1 (2016): 1–22.

The story continues with the strangers leaving and looking down upon Sodom, where the declaration of Abraham's role in the blessing of outsiders is repeated, albeit with a subtle difference: instead of "families of the earth," Genesis 18:18 uses "nations of the earth," a phrase with more political overtones.

In the story of Sodom, Abraham shows a surprising amount of concern for outsiders in his pleading with יהוה to save them if there is a remnant of righteous ones among them. Although Abraham does not deny that there are a majority of unrighteous people in the city, he does not believe they are unrighteous simply because they are outsiders. Rather, by his pleas that the righteous not be swept away with the unrighteous, as this would be unjust, Abraham implies that their status as outsiders is not what makes them righteous or unrighteous. Moreover, whether they are righteous or not, the story boldly displays Abraham bargaining for the lives of outsiders with יהוה, something that should not be overlooked.[107] It could be argued that Abraham is simply interceding out of a desire to save Lot, however, this is not what the story portrays as Abraham's reasoning; he is seeking that יהוה act justly according to his character.

Irvine presents an interesting comparison between these two chapters in that they are depicting proper and improper examples of hospitality. Abraham and Lot are presented as ideal hosts and are contrasted with the residents of Sodom, and in both episodes, God responds to the hospitality with an "appropriate" response: Abraham is rewarded with the promise of a son, Lot is spared from destruction, and the residents of Sodom are destroyed for their inhospitable actions.[108]

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[107] Mafico however argues that the nature of the story is not Abraham arguing for the lives of anyone, but rather probing the limits and extent of divine justice. See Temba L. Mafico, "The Crucial Question Concerning the Justice of God (Gen 18:23–26)," *JTSA* 42 (1983): 11–16. For more on Abraham's bartering and relationship with יהוה in the passage, see Troy Miller, "Relationships, Haggling, and Injustice in Genesis 18," *JTAK* 36.2 (2012): 29–38.

[108] Irvine, "'Is Anything Too Hard for Yahweh?," 298–99.

Source-Critical Discussion

Genesis 18:1–19:28 has quite widespread support in its general association with the Yahwist, although some, such as Irvine, view portions of the text as later accretions. [109] One such portion that Irvine suspects is a later addition is 18:17–19 where יהוה justifies telling Abraham his plan because of his blessing and role in the nations.[110] In addition, Irvine argues for the secondary nature of 18:22b–33a, where Abraham bargains with יהוה for the fate of Sodom.[111] However, in regards to this later passage, which Irvine argues is a superfluous portion of the overall narrative in chapters 18–19 and contributes little to the broader story, it actually fits the overall narrative quite well as Genesis 19 makes great pains to note that *every* man in Sodom was at Lot's door seeking the strangers. Without Abraham's bargaining, the narrative takes on a rather flat dimension. Scholars that attribute Genesis 18:22b–33a to J include, for example, Speiser, Van Seters, and Wenham, the latter of which presents the structure of chapters 18 and 19 as evidence of their narrative cohesion.[112]

It is interesting to note that behind the depiction of Sodom's destruction perhaps exists an older ANE themed story of a "world calamity."[113] Marilyn M. Schaub notes that elements of the story point towards other ANE destruction narratives. These elements include Lot's daughter's belief that there are no more men left to mate with, and the reason that the strangers give to Lot for Sodom's impending destruction in Genesis 19:13: that the "their cries" have gone before יהוה. While in the overall context of the narrative most translators render this verse in the form of

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[109] Irvine, "'Is Anything Too Hard for Yahweh?," 286–88.

[110] Irvine, "'Is Anything Too Hard for Yahweh?," 288–91.

[111] Irvine, "'Is Anything Too Hard for Yahweh?," 291–93. Westermann also holds these verses to be a later addition. See Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 286–87.

[112] E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 of *AB* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 135; Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 213–16; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 44.

[113] Marilyn M. Schaub, "Lot and the Cities of the Plain: A Little About a Lot," *Proceedings from the EGLBS Annual Conference* (1982): 5–6.

outcry against Sodom's evil action, it is interesting to note that the Hebrew (כִּי-גָדְלָה צַעֲקָתָם אֶת-פְּנֵי יְהוָֹה) presents another possibility, as noted by Schaub: "because their noise is loud before Yahweh."[114] Such a translation, in the context of calamitous destruction, bears striking similarities to other ANE destruction myths where humanity is wiped out or threatened with destruction because of their "noise." Nevertheless, it is evident that the editor of this passage has taken this story and woven it into his own larger narrative concerning hospitality and sin, as can be demonstrated by Genesis 18:20–21 (NRSV): "Then the Lord said, 'How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know.'"

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

If one were to merely interpret this passage synchronically, the nuanced possibility that this story has been transformed from an ancient calamity episode that emphasized an "annoyed" deity into a story about hospitality and sin would be lost. As a result, a diachronic analysis of this passage has helped to illuminate a rich possibility where an editor has taken a common cultural milieu and used it to demonstrate instead aspects of hospitality and care for outsiders, thus giving new and relevant meaning to the story.

[114] Schaub, "Lot and the Cities of the Plain," 5.

Genesis 24: A Wife for Isaac

Portrayal of Outsiders

One of the final incidents involving outsiders and Abraham is his declaration that he does not desire his son Isaac to have a Canaanite wife, nor to leave the land that is promised to him in Genesis 24:1–7. As a result the view of outsiders in this passage is arguably bleak, at least in regards to its opinions on intermarriage, though this may simply be the result of a strong kinship mentality rather than disdain for outsiders.

Source-Critical Discussion

This passage is almost universally ascribed to J by many of the prominent source critics (Noth, von Rad, etc.), though others such as Westermann seem to point towards a likelihood that this story is from a later hand given the connection with Deuteronomy's ordinance that the Israelites shall not take Canaanite women as wives for their sons.[115] This could also be derived from Sarna's commentary regarding the Torah's description of the native Canaanites as "unregenerately corrupt."[116] While this depiction is certainly true of the view in later Pentateuchal books, such a depiction has not been thus far been extensively demonstrated within the J narrative, an exception perhaps being the Sodom episode. Van Seters believes that this narrative is modelled by his exilic J author after an older version in the Jacob story of Genesis 29.[117] If this is the case, then the negative depictions of the Canaanites could also be a holdover

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[115] Roth, "Wooing of Rebekah," 177; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 384–85.

[116] Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis = Be-Reshit: The Traditional Hebrew Text With New JPS Translation*, 1st ed., JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1989), 161.

[117] Van Seters, *The Pentateuch*, 129–30.

from an older time, or the result of later editing.[118] This would in part agree with Wenham's assessment of this passage in which an early narrative regarding marriage and the continuation of promise has been edited and the language updated by later redactors/scribes multiple times to be similar to Deuteronomistic terminology.[119] Indeed, Westermann views this passage as a multi-layered composition with elements of it, such as the theme of a "guidance narrative," being added by a later hand, as was noted above.[120] As a result, there is the question of whether the seemingly negative, in terms of its views of the outsider, command not to take a wife for Isaac from the Canaanites is from the "original" J narrative or from a later hand. This is especially the case given Abraham's own relationship with a foreign slave woman to produce an heir, and the blessing of that foreign woman within the J narrative. If it is indeed from the J narrative, then one wonders why Abraham would make such a command, given the relatively positive outlook towards outsiders in the surrounding J passages. However, as was noted above, it is possible that such a command simply comes from a "strong kinship" mentality, rather than a disdain from outsiders, though it is still puzzling given Abraham's own activities. If, however, this passage has been redacted and the language used represents later concerns about endogamy, then the passage fits much better in the overall J presentation of outsiders.

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

Given the above argued interpolation of these verses by a later hand, diachronic analysis allows the reader to understand the sudden shift regarding outsiders in the text where the

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[118] If this is the case then there is an interesting possibility that this text stands at a proverbial crossroads in the way Canaanites were depicted in Israelite history, being between negative earlier depictions and later Deuteronomistic depictions. This would also address Wenham's concerns regarding van Seter's argument that this passage derives from the exilic period. See Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 139.

[119] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 139.

[120] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 383–84.

seeming preference of endogamy in these verses appears out of touch with the larger narrative of Abraham's life. Had this text merely been interpreted synchronically, these verses would be quite vexing in comparison to earlier interactions and choices made by Abraham and indeed God. As a result source criticism here offers the reader an interpretive framework for understanding certain peculiarities within the text.

Genesis 25: Nations Descending From Abraham

Portrayal of Outsiders

Finally, when Abraham is putting his affairs in order toward the end of his life in Genesis 25:1–6, various nations surrounding Israel are described as his children, but are given gifts and sent away from Isaac and the land that is promised to Abraham.[121] It is interesting that from the perspective of the narrator, these nations are not simply sent away, but are given gifts. While Abraham understood that in order for his son to receive the promises from God these people needed to be sent away, he also makes it clear that they are his children and receive a gift on their departure. Again we are given a picture of clear preferential treatment of the chosen one, but also concern for those outside that circle.

Source-Critical Discussion

Although Westermann quotes Noth as saying that 25:1–6 is "an addition from an unknown period," Noth only stated this regarding 25:1–4, with 25:5–6 being ascribed to J, while

[121] For possible explanation of all the names and connections of Abraham's children see Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 158–60.

von Rad attributes all of 25:1–6 to J.[122] Wenham, though not offering his own thoughts on the matter, notes various scholars who view these verses as coming from a late stage of the editing of the Pentateuch given the difference between these verses and chapter 24 where Abraham's death is "near and presumed."[123] This apparent sorting of affairs at the end of Abraham's life seems to fulfill the promise given by God to Abraham in Genesis 21:12, a passage attributed to the E source by Noth, which could also lend weight to its status as a later redaction, if E postdates J.[124]

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

If these verses are from a later hand, this would explain the sudden concern of the narrative with preserving the so-called "purity" of Abraham's legacy by sending away all but the chosen son. Again, were this passage simply viewed synchronically, then the reader would be left quite confused at how Abraham was on relatively friendly terms with most outsiders, but now they must all be sent away to give Isaac clear preferential treatment.[125]

Conclusion

As a result, the overarching picture that the J source paints of the portrayal of outsiders is one marked with preferential treatment for Abraham as well as care for the outsiders that is often dependent on their treatment of Abraham, and yet is also quite favorable for them despite their outsider status.

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[122] Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 395; Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 193, note 532; Rad, *Genesis*, 262.

[123] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 157.

[124] Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 264.

[125] It is also possible, however, to see this as simply another example of clear preference being shown for the chosen, with the "unchosen" still being treated in a favorable manner.

The value of diachronic analysis in this instance is clear. Though it does come in some instances at the cost of ambiguity and uncertainty, it has the potential to greatly illuminate the narrative.[126] Overall, it has been shown that as an analytical tool and even as a framework for interpretation, there are specific instances where it can help to explain curious features of the text as well as demonstrate that the care shown for outsiders may have existed in some of the earliest traditions taken up into the J narrative.

[126] For an example of another scholar wrestling with the question of what diachronic analysis adds to interpretation, see Ralph W. Klein, "Yahwist Looks at Abraham," *CTM* 45.1 (1974): 43–49.

THE PORTRAYAL OF OUTSIDERS IN THE E SOURCE

Introduction

As was the case in the previous one, this chapter will first lay out a foundational understanding of the E source by describing the perspectives of various scholars. Subsequently, all the texts which deal with outsiders and are classified as the E source according to Noth will be analyzed for their contribution to the overall discussion regarding the nature of outsiders in the Abrahamic narratives. Following that, each text will undergo a source-critical analysis in which various scholarly opinions are discussed regarding the origins of the text in order to build a further understanding of the E source and to determine the continuing relevance of source-critical study for the purposes of final form interpretation, or the understanding of the text as it stands.

Characteristics of the E Source

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, the E source has often been differentiated from other Pentateuchal sources, particularly J, by vocabulary such as the usage, or lack thereof, of the divine name.[1] Generally, the E text is seen to use Elohim until יהוה is revealed to Moses in Exodus 3.[2] This identification and differentiation then usually continues in key "foothold" passages in the ancestral narratives of Genesis and spreads from there.[3] However, it should also be noted that by some scholars who hold to the Documentary Hypothesis there is in some regards

[1] Fretheim takes this a step further in his assertion that God is more obviously present in J than in E. See Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 308. For more on the distinguishing elements of the various sources, see Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 7–31.

[2] Weisman, "The Interrelationship between J and E in Jacob's Narrative," 178.

[3] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 116–17.

no differentiation to be found between J and E.[4] For example, Weisman makes an argument regarding the lack of differentiation, specifically concerning a "national consciousness", between J and E texts. He goes as far as to state, "…as far as the national transformation in the Abrahamic narratives is concerned, one would be hard put to prove that E was instituted upon J or that it represented a later national-historical conception."[5] Nevertheless, Weisman uses other identifying characteristics, such as a different conception of גוי גקול ("great nation"), to articulate that there was a separate E tradition.[6] He also notes that often this E tradition, especially in the Jacob narratives, contains much closer ties and holdovers from the cultural and religious views of the ancient Canaanites than do the narrative cycles concerning Abraham and Isaac.[7] Moreover, the E narrative in general possesses a more tolerant attitude to these leftovers than do the other sources.[8]

In terms of characteristic styling, McEvenue notes that "…E is ample in treatment, loose and almost wordy, whereas J is spare and elliptical and tends to write speeches in tense couplets."[9] Moreover, McEvenue notes that the Elohist tends to use a narrative style which fosters the reader's interaction with the text.[10] One of the major themes of the Elohist narrative is that individuals should possess true "fear of God."[11]

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[4] See Römer, "Abraham's Righteousness and Sacrifice," 7. Such was also the case from an early foray into the use of computer analysis in biblical studies, although the authors do not hold to the Documentary Hypothesis at all. It should be noted however that the conclusions drawn by this analysis were solely grammatical in nature and not based on the content or repetition of portions therein. See Yehuda T. Radday, et al., "Genesis, Wellhausen and the Computer," *ZAW* 94.4 (1982): 467–481.

[5] Weisman, "National Consciousness in the Patriarchal Promises," 61.

[6] Weisman, "National Consciousness in the Patriarchal Promises," 65–66.

[7] Weisman, "The Interrelationship between J and E in Jacob's Narrative," 196.

[8] Weisman, "The Interrelationship between J and E in Jacob's Narrative," 196.

[9] McEvenue, "Comparison of Narrative Styles in the Hagar Stories," 77.

[10] Sean E. McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," *ZAW* 96.3 (1984): 323–30.

[11] Hans Walter Wolff, "Elohistic Fragments in the Pentateuch," *Int* 26.2 (1972): 164–67.

If there is an E Source, Is it a Contiguous Narrative or Fragmentary?

Scholars are similarly divided on the unity of the E source. Noth, while pointing out the E material is certainly fragmentary in nature, believed that it was possible to perceive it once existing as an independent narrative.[12] Wolff similarly holds to a view of E in which it was an independent narrative with the caveat that only fragments of this once independent narrative now exist in the Pentateuch This then gives rise to the view that E was only a fragmentary narrative to begin with.[13] Speiser is among many who also hold this traditional view that E is an independent source that has its own specific characteristics such as the use of the divine name Elohim in connection with dreams and angels.[14] Propp, while admitting that E is fragmentary, and hardly distinguishable from J in Genesis, looks to Exodus as clear evidence that it is indeed an independent source, a similar contention that Baden makes, as will be discussed below.[15] Contrarily, Whybray takes a much harsher stance when he states that:

> The extant 'E' material, then, is, by universal agreement, not a complete document. At best, it is a torso. 'E' as a document has no actual existence, but is merely an hypothesis constructed on the basis of a series of narratives and smaller fragments, which cannot be fitted together to form a whole. In these circumstances the criteria of language and style, even if admissible in this case, cannot prove that it was ever a continuous whole, nor can the existence of doublets in the Pentateuchal text.[16]

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[12] Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 37. See also Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 311.

[13] Wolff, "Elohistic Fragments in the Pentateuch," 159–61, 169–70, 172–73. Wolff supports this claim by pointing out the consistent theme of the fear of God contained within the Elohistic fragments, a theme which should not exist common to all the narratives if they truly are independent fragments as some argue. For Wolff's discussion on the fear of God in the E texts, see Wolff, "Elohistic Fragments in the Pentateuch," 164–67. Moreover, Wolff argues that even the fragmentary E texts demonstrate a high level of compositional skill by the author in which the episodes are linked together through dialogue and portray how, "over a long period of time God led his people through a series of tests of their obedience." Wolff, "Elohistic Fragments in the Pentateuch," 172. For a full discussion of this narrative structure, see Wolff, "Elohistic Fragments in the Pentateuch," 167–72. For a critique of Wolff's arguments, see Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 114–16.

[14] Speiser, *Genesis*, xxx.

[15] William Henry Propp, *Exodus 19–40: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 1st ed., vol. 2A of *AB* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 728–29.

[16] Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 112.

Similarly, there are also other scholars, such as Van Seters, Westermann, and Gnuse, who, at least among the Abrahamic narratives, do not see E as an independent source in the traditional sense, but rather as a fragmentary group of texts building off of previous ones which were then integrated into later works.[17] In Van Seters' case, he sees these texts, which are traditionally seen as belonging to the Elohist, along with others being taken up into his redefined version of the J source, which is an exilic composition using previous traditions and materials. In his view, this theory does away with the need for a set of redactors who combined what was seen as otherwise independent narratives.[18] Westermann similarly holds that while J was an independent text, the traditional E texts are supplementary texts that are attached to the J narrative.[19] One of the differences between Van Seters and Westermann is that Van Seters dates J to the exile and the passages such as Genesis 12:10–20, which later E texts like Genesis 20 are seen to supplement, are viewed not as part of J but as pre-J traditions that were later integrated with the supplementary E texts into J's narrative. Gnuse, while still holding to a more cohesive view of E than that of Van Seters, nonetheless views the Elohistic source as a fragmentary set of traditions that were later absorbed and redacted by Southern theologians (such as J).[20] Weisman takes a similar stance as this when he argues, on the basis of the naming of cultic sites and their association with various deities in the different patriarchal narratives, that E contains an older, and northern, set of traditions that were subsequently taken up and adapted by J into the larger

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[17] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 311; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 347; Robert Karl Gnuse, "The Elohist: A 7th-Century BCE Theological Tradition," *BTB* 42.2 (2012): 59; Robert Karl Gnuse, "Northern Prophetic Traditions in the Books of Samuel and Kings as Precursor to the Elohist," *ZAW* 122.3 (2010): 374.

[18] Van Seters, *The Pentateuch*, 60–61.

[19] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 347.

[20] Robert Karl Gnuse, "Redefining the Elohist," *JBL* 119.2 (2000): 215; Gnuse, "Northern Prophetic Traditions in the Books of Samuel and Kings as Precursor to the Elohist," 374.

narrative.[21] These fragmentary E traditions, which Gnuse sees as occurring as a result of the fall of Samaria, coalesce shortly prior to the southern exile and help lay the foundation for the shift from polytheism to monotheism.[22]

It is relevant to note for the present study that Noth's own writings stand adamantly against the above hypotheses, as he thoroughly denied the possibility of a dependence of one source on the other but instead put forward a common basis, or source that was used in the composition of both.[23] As a result, some of the above scholars have departed from the traditional Documentary Hypothesis as viewed by Noth and adopted either a fragmentary hypothesis, a supplementary hypothesis, or some combination of both.

Baden, on the other hand, contends that rather than beginning in Genesis where the E text is more fragmented, one should instead begin in the more unified sections of the Exodus and Numbers narratives and build a framework of narrative identity from these sections based solely on self-contained historical claims.[24] This narrative identity can then be used to classify earlier passages in Genesis. It is worth noting that what Baden means by historical claims, refers not specifically to claims in a passage such as "x event happened at y time in history," but rather of the type "x person did y" and often compared to where another passage says "x person did z," where z and y are mutually exclusive. In other words, Baden is referring to the content of the

[21] Weisman, "The Interrelationship between J and E in Jacob's Narrative," 193–95.

[22] Gnuse, "Redefining the Elohist," 208–9.

[23] Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 38–39.

[24] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 119. A similar approach was taken in Axel Graupner, *Der Elohist: Gegenwart Und Wirksamkeit Des Transzendenten Gottes in Der Geschichte*, vol. 97 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2002) as pointed out by Carr. See David M. Carr, "No Return to Wellhausen," *Bib* 86.1 (2005): 107–8.

stories themselves, rather than externally verifiable historical contentions.[25] As a result of his study, Baden staunchly argues that the E texts do represent a unified narrative.

Historical Context of the E Source

Traditionally, the E source has been dated between 850–750 BCE in the divided monarchy and placed second to J in its antiquity, with J being dated often a century earlier than E.[26] Contrary to the view that J antedates E, Weisman makes an argument from the perspective of a developing national consciousness that E is older than J because in, "…the patriarchal promises, at any rate, it represents the collective consciousness of tribes of settlers rather than that of a nation or a kingdom."[27]

Geographic locale will also factor heavily into the subsequent discussion. Indeed, E material is typically thought to be northern in origin, a point which will be further discussed in the below arguments for dating the source.[28] However, the assumption that all the Elohistic texts are northern in origin has also been challenged by scholars such as Hong.[29] Hong has argued that the Abrahamic traditions are in their entirety southern, and it is the Jacob-Joseph-Moses traditions that are northern and were subsequently taken up and expanded in the south after the

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[25] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 125.

[26] Speiser, *Genesis*, xxx. See also above regarding the antiquity of E relative to J. Knohl upholds a mid-eighth century date for E, although he dates P as the earliest source followed by E and then J. See Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 155.

[27] Weisman, "National Consciousness in the Patriarchal Promises," 68. One could possibly argue, however, that this reflection could also come from a time, such as the exile, when the nation has been "dissolved" and its people are once more broken into groups similar to "tribes of settlers."

[28] Carr, "No Return to Wellhausen," 111–12; Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 311; Wolff, "Elohistic Fragments in the Pentateuch," 172; Royden Keith Yerkes, "The Location and Etymology of YHWH YR'AH, Gn. 22:14," *JBL* 31.3 (1912): 138; Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 61–88.

[29] Koog-Pyoung Hong, "Abraham, Genesis 20–22, and the Northern Elohist," *Biblica* 94.3 (2013): 321–339.

fall of Samaria, which sees the Judean rewriting of the history of Israel and the assumption of that identity.[30]

In terms of specific dating of the source, scholars have pursued many different creative avenues which they believe point to distinct periods of history. Some, such as Gnuse, place the Elohist in the 7th century BCE,[31] a date that he corresponds to just after the fall of Samaria in 722, which he sees as a reason for the composition of the source.[32] Gnuse also uses his 7th century date, which he supports by comparing the texts to Neo-Assyrian and Chaldean Babylonian dream accounts and the Deir ʻAlla inscription, to argue that the Elohist "fragments" were inspired by northern prophetic texts.[33] Specifically, Gnuse compares the fragments to prophetic sections of 1 Samuel and 1–2 Kings and notes several curious features in common with Elohist texts such as the imagery of fire, angelic intermediaries, prominent mountains, dreams, themes of prophetic identity, divine retribution, animals as divine agents, and a marked prominence of the fear of God.[34] However, were one to reject Gnuse's arguments for a 7th century date, these features could just as easily be explained in the reverse with E texts influencing the prophetic tradition.

Fretheim goes so far as to suggest that the material has its origins in the time of Elijah, "near the mid-point in the history of the northern kingdom."[35] Wolff similarly argues for dating the E source to the century between Elijah and Hosea as this was a time in his view where details

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[30] Hong, "Abraham, Genesis 20–22, and the Northern Elohist," 335–36.

[31] Gnuse, "Redefining the Elohist," 204; Gnuse, "The Elohist," 59.

[32] Gnuse, "Redefining the Elohist," 209.

[33] Gnuse, "The Elohist," 59–60; Gnuse, "Redefining the Elohist," 201–20. For more on this argument see Robert Karl Gnuse, "Dreams in the Night—Scholarly Mirage or Theophanic Formula? The Dream Report as a Motif of the So-Called Elohist Tradition," *BZ* 39.1 (1995): 28–53.

[34] Gnuse, "Northern Prophetic Traditions in the Books of Samuel and Kings as Precursor to the Elohist," 377–85. For a comprehensive view of all of Gnuse's arguments and evidence see Robert Karl Gnuse, *The Elohist : A Seventh-Century Theological Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017).

[35] Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 311.

and major themes of the narratives seem to fit with the historical context that existed.[36] He states succinctly, "The new interpretation which the Elohist gave to the old traditional materials of Israel can be best explained against the background of the syncretism following the time of Elijah. It was then that Israel was exposed to great cultic, political, and social temptations."[37]

Friedman supports the northern theory of E texts and points to various features, such as the prominence of Ephraim in the E version of Jacob's deathbed blessing, to demonstrate this claim.[38] He even goes as far to identify the E writer with a Levite from Shiloh that, after the ascendancy of Jeroboam, was dispossessed from long held religious authority through the establishment of cultic centres at Dan and Bethel where different priests served.[39] For Friedman, this places the composition of E between 922–722 BCE.[40] While many of Friedman's arguments and theories answer questions raised by various features of the text, it is worth repeating here the caution of Westermann that texts functioned solely as vehicles for a contemporary author's message in his own time:[41]

> It is further certain that the meaning of the written works cannot be read simply from the message addressed by the writers to their contemporary listeners or readers with their particular biases. Besides the intention of giving their contemporaries some appropriate advice, exhortations, and admonitions by means of the old stories, there is another intention of equal importance. They intend to pass on to their contemporaries what they themselves have received, something that has no concern with the contemporary situation but which is to be heard and passed on yet again so that it may have a voice in a quite different situation known neither to the listeners nor to the bearer of the tradition.

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[36] Wolff, "Elohistic Fragments in the Pentateuch," 172–73.

[37] Wolff, "Elohistic Fragments in the Pentateuch," 173.

[38] Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 65. For more features from the narratives themselves that Friedman points to which support this theory, see Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 62–69.

[39] Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 72. For more on Friedman's argument and identification of the author of the E texts, see Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 70–88.

[40] Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 87. Friedman also argues that the Hebrew of J and E comes from the earliest stage of linguistic development. See Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 7–8.

[41] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 33.

Nevertheless, in regards to purpose, Fretheim argues that the Elohist text is "intended to bring [the people] to a renewed commitment to the covenant."[42] Specifically in relation to the ancestral narratives, this purpose is achieved by presenting the Elohist's contemporaries with examples to emulate that are "presented as real people and not as impossible-to-emulate ideals."[43] This purpose fits into Fretheim's overall view that the Elohist texts place a much higher emphasis on human activity and purpose within the overall divine economy.[44] God is seen to act, but it is often through human mediators and in an indirect fashion.[45] Similarly, McEvenue highlights that in the Elohist passages God is portrayed as reacting to the events that unfold in the human drama rather than in a more transcendent fashion as in the Priestly narratives.[46] Such a view of purpose behind the text is not entirely at odds with Westermann's cautionary note, as it is possible that the text can function in more than one dimension: it can be the legitimate passing on of tradition for tradition's sake and framed in a manner that will also highlight the editor's point of view.[47]

Textual Context of the E Source

While the J and P sources are usually traced back to the beginning chapters of Genesis, what has been traditionally seen as the E source occurs for the first time in the Abrahamic

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[42] Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 313.

[43] Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 314.

[44] Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 314.

[45] See also Gnuse, "Northern Prophetic Traditions in the Books of Samuel and Kings as Precursor to the Elohist," 380.

[46] McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," 319.

[47] For a similar approach to other texts see Chris Keith, "Social Memory Theory and Gospels Research: The First Decade (Part One)," *EC* 6.3 (2015): 354–376; Chris Keith, "Social Memory Theory and Gospels Research: The First Decade (Part Two)," *EC* 6.4 (2015): 517–542; Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher, eds., *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2005).

narratives, and according to Noth, this happens first in Genesis 15.[48] The source is seen by some, such as Fretheim, to extend to the covenant at Shechem in Joshua 24.[49]

Occurrences of Outsiders in the E Source

Genesis 15: Covenant Ceremony

Portrayal of Outsiders

As was just mentioned, the first such occurrence of outsiders in the E source is Genesis 15:13–16, following a covenantal ceremony between יהוה and Abraham.[50] The text deals with what is evidently a sort of prophecy of the exodus and describes how Abraham's offspring will eventually be slaves in another nation. However, God will intervene and bring them to the land he promised to them, after the "iniquity of the Amorites" is "completed." The passage presents a view of outsiders where one particular nation will oppress Abraham's descendants and in turn will be judged by God. In addition, God's judgment on a group of people referred to as the "Amorites" is portrayed as patiently waiting for them to proverbially dig their own grave. This view, although missing the previously found overt care for the outsider in the J texts, nonetheless similarly shows definite preference for the chosen as well as the promised judgement on those who curse or harm Abraham, possibly in addition to those who sin, even if they are outside of

[48] Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 263.

[49] Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 311.

[50] It is worth noting that Genesis 15 according to Noth is a blend between J and E, and that the usage of יהוה does not occur in E verses as classified by Noth.

God's covenant people.[51] As a result, this passage thoroughly upholds the blessings spoken over Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3, and may indicate some awareness of them. It is again of note that the pending judgement is not on outsiders in general, but on one specific group, and moreover only on a specific group that is inhabiting land promised to Abraham.

Source-Critical Discussion

The question of how this passage deals with outsiders being relatively easy to answer, we must now move to one decidedly more difficult: whether or not this passage should indeed be classified as E as Noth thought. According to Noth the E source in Genesis 15 consists of vv. 3a, 5, and 13–16. However, there is much contention within scholarship as to the makeup of this chapter. Westermann, like Noth, points out that Genesis 15 is broken into two (or more) texts, although he differs on the classification of many of the verses from Noth, and follows L. Perlitt, believing that vv. 7–21 contains no elements of Yahwistic origin.[52] While this partially agrees with Noth's classification of vv. 13–16 as E, it stands against his classification of vv. 6–12 and 17–21 as J.[53] Contrarily, Wenham in his commentary makes a case that Gen 15:13–16 are not from E, but either later additions and/or part of the unified narrative that was pre–J.[54] This position is also held in part by Van Seters who views this passage as *ex eventu* prophecy composed in the exile.[55] Nicholson similarly admits that much of Genesis 15, in particular

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[51] For a related discussion on whether God's punishment, and the related חרם command, of those inhabiting the "promised land" is more a result of their sin, or simply the fact that they are proverbially in the wrong place at the wrong time due to their habitation of the land promised to Abraham, see Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 148–93, 208–25.

[52] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 214–17.

[53] Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 263.

[54] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 326.

[55] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 259, 267.

Genesis 15:9–12, and 17–21, which Noth identifies with J, probably emerged between the late-pre-exilic period after the fall of Samaria and the exilic period.[56] If this is the case, while not affecting the status of Genesis 15:14 as E, this argument does call into question Noth's chronology and lends support to Van Seter's view of an exilic J. However, Nicholson does immediately point out that these verses seem to be inserted into a pre-existent text, which conversely calls into question Van Seters unified view of this passage.[57] It is also worth noting, in support of multiple sources being contained within this chapter, that in v. 16 the Amorites alone are mentioned as opposed to vv. 19–21 where they are listed as part of a larger group of "-ites." While this demarcation based on the identification of these people groups does not specifically point to the above verses in question's association with any particular source, it does support the view that vv. 13–16 are from a separate source than vv. 19–21.

If this passage is not E as Noth perceived, but rather somehow associated with J, this would explain the harmony between God's judgment on those who harm Abraham's descendants, and the blessings found in Genesis 12:1–3, a text that is nearly universally ascribed to J. Moreover, an association with J, or even granting that this text was taken up by the J editor into his narrative, would also explain the divine name usage in the chapter. However, Baden, using his narrative method of identification,[58] makes the argument that this passage, though out of place in the immediate narrative, does indeed fit within the larger E narrative, specifically within the E depiction of the Exodus in Exodus 3:21–22.[59] Overall, with the exception of a few

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[56] Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen*, 142. Similarly, Römer highlights that Genesis 15 is one of, if not the latest, the later texts of the Abrahamic narratives. See Römer, "Abraham's Righteousness and Sacrifice," 14–15.

[57] Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen*, 143. Friedman similarly classifies these verses as the work of a final redactor. See Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 54.

[58] See the above section "Characteristics of the E source" for a description of Baden's method.

[59] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 125.

scholars, this passage is viewed as the combination of two or more sources, though agreement on how the verses should be divided is clearly contentious.

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

For such a short verse that only tersely deals with outsiders, the value brought by source-critical analysis in our present case study is minimized further by uncertainty regarding the identification of sources, and limited mostly to v. 16. Nevertheless, there are certain gleanings to be found. Given that the passage is more or less a prophecy, *ex eventu* or not, it is simply describing what will be, or was, a historical "reality" and as such does not contain much detail that would be affected by knowing when it was edited or composed. However, if one could date this text, then it is possible that some light would be shed on v. 16 and a possible identity of who the Amorites could symbolize would emerge. If the Amorites in the text are not merely a bygone or future group of people but rather a stand-in for a particular group that the author or the scribes recording the tradition have in mind, then it may be possible to gain some insight into the historical circumstances which surround the text and the opinion of the surrounding people groups in that time period. As an example of this, Westermann points out that v. 16 could be a note of comfort to those in the exilic time that the reason why God has not intervened against Israel's enemies is "…because their guilt has not yet run its course…"[60] Moreover, it could also be possible to identify the different sources within this chapter based on the usage of Amorites as a solitary group in v. 16 as opposed to being part of a larger group of tribes identified in vv. 19–21, in light of the usage of "Amorite" elsewhere in the Pentateuch and Hebrew Bible.[61] Again we

[60] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 228.

[61] For example one could make a comparison between Amos' usage of "land of the Amorite" compared to other prophetic texts from the north and south.

see here demonstrated cogent examples of how source-critical analysis forms a valuable framework for understanding various peculiar features in the text, but does include many ambiguous, and possibly even confusing, aspects.

Genesis 20: Abimelech and יהוה

Portrayal of Outsiders

The next passage where outsiders occur is in Genesis 20 when Abraham interacts with Abimelech after passing off Sarah as his sister.[62] Unwittingly and unintentionally taking another man's wife, Abimelech takes Sarah.[63] God then comes in a dream to Abimelech, a foreigner, who interestingly calls God "my Lord" (אֲדֹנָי), a similar epithet to that used by Abraham when he addresses יהוה, as demonstrated by Genesis 15:2, 18:3, and 18:27, 30–32.[64]

In the continuing narrative, God informs Abimelech of what he has done, and Abimelech claims ignorance regarding Sarah's marital status. Therefore, Abimelech asks God if he will "even/also" kill a righteous people, possibly showing knowledge of the destruction of Sodom in Genesis 19 and its background (traditionally a J story) a point that will be touched on below.[65] God responds by acknowledging that Abimelech, though a foreigner, is indeed righteous before him; or at the very least God demonstrates that he cares enough to prevent him from sinning

[62] Interestingly, the LXX includes a tangential note from Abraham that he passed of Sarah as his sister because he was afraid someone would kill him because of her, seemingly echoing Genesis 12:10-20.

[63] Wolff points out that objectively Abimelech is guilty, as he took another man's wife, but subjectively he is innocent as he did it out of ignorance and also had not touched her yet, whereas for Abraham it is the opposite, as he is objectively innocent, as Sarah is indeed his sister, but subjectively he has led Abimelech into danger of committing sin. See Wolff, "Elohistic Fragments in the Pentateuch," 161–62.

[64] All of which are classified by Noth as J texts. Westermann, however, disagrees and argues that this does not necessarily signify Abimelech's recognition of יהוה as his lord, but simply that he recognizes the voice as divine. See Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 322.

[65] The LXX adds "ignorant" in Abimelech's declaration of his righteousness.

because he was doing nothing wrong intentionally. However, despite this admission, Abimelech is still in effect sentenced to death for his actions towards Sarah, a sentence that God gives Abimelech the possibility of changing once he is made aware of his predicament, though if he now were to willfully continue on the path that he is on, death will indeed be the result for Abimelech and his people. McEvenue makes the interesting observation that simply returning Sarah to Abraham is not enough to heal the "guilt" that has been brought about by taking Sarah, instead Abraham needs to pray for him.[66]

Nevertheless, Abimelech not only promptly returns Sarah to Abraham, but provides both Abraham and Sarah with compensation for the whole debacle. Abraham then acts as a mediator between God and Abimelech by praying that God would heal Abimelech and his family.[67] In this regard Abraham's role as a mediator is introduced in what Noth classifies as E texts, a role which will feature more prominently below in the repetition of Abraham's role in blessing the nations.

Again, in this story clear preference and protection is demonstrated for God's chosen, and yet great care for the outsider. This is something echoed by Westermann in his commentary where he points out that the narrator/author is telling his contemporary generation that they should avoid a narrow-minded insider/outsider dichotomy while at the same time declaring that God's action towards his chosen is not dependent upon their behaviour.[68] Hamilton similarly points to how this passage expands the sphere of God's revelation beyond his own people.[69] Nevertheless, despite Abraham's dubiously justifiable deception of Abimelech, he still has God's protection over him and Sarah, who is to be the mother of his progeny, which clearly

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[66] McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," 326.

[67] Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 313. It is worth noting that Abraham is also referred to by יהוה as a prophet earlier in the passage (Gen 20:7).

[68] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 329.

[69] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 18–50*, vol. 2 of *NICOT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 60.

demonstrates God's preferential treatment of his chosen.[70] Moreover, even in his deception of Abimelech, Abraham is still called on by God to be the mediator of the healing that was required because of his deception, which, at least to modern sensibilities, seems unfair; and yet, this is God's preference for his chosen. This preference is then substantiated by Abraham being materially "blessed" by Abimelech as reparation for a fault caused, intentionally or not, directly by Abraham's decision to conceal his relationship with Sarah.[71]

Furthermore, Abraham's answer to the charges of Abimelech possibly presents another facet to the view of outsiders: when he states that he thought there was no "fear of God in this place," he is implying that a fear of God would represent an understanding of how people are to be "properly" treated. Indeed, Westermann goes as far as to say, "…the fear of God then means conduct which regards the basic standards of the human community with respect to aliens."[72] This is framed similarly by Wolff: "Fear of God is understood here as respect for the freedom and responsibility of the outsider. Wherever God is feared, that is, wherever men are obedient to God's protective will, we can expect to find respect for the rights of outsiders."[73] However, even if such a view was held by Abraham, the narrative ups the ante so to speak. Whereas Abraham merely assumed that these foreigners would not share his version of morality, Abimelech is demonstrated as not only being appalled that he was going to unintentionally take another man's wife, but also that he fears and indeed listens to God when he speaks to him, returns Sarah, and even gives Abraham gifts and access to the land. As Wolff points out, Abimelech honours God's

[70] Fretheim seems to hold that Abraham's deception is justifiable, though not "unambiguously exemplary, given the danger into which he led Abimelech." See Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 313. Another perspective on the deception is the motif of tricksterism which is pointed out by Lohr. See Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 106–14.

[71] McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," 328.

[72] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 325.

[73] Wolff, "Elohistic Fragments in the Pentateuch," 162–63.

commands.[74] If this is the case, then by the text demonstrating that Abimelech did indeed fear God, it is making a powerful statement regarding the relationship of outsiders to Abraham's God.[75] Whereas the insiders may think that those outside their community have no place or interaction with God, this story demonstrates that such a belief may not always be the case. Rather, from the perspective of the narrative, it is the outsider who is portrayed as the one who understands how "outsiders" should be treated and not Abraham. Moreover, this is one of the few places in the Hebrew Bible where יהוה appears to a non-Israelite in a dream, and an even rarer occurrence where the non-Israelite does not need an "insider" to unravel the message in the dream.[76] This, in conjunction with Abraham's favour with God despite his deception, demonstrates a remarkable level of awareness and concern for outsiders by the narrator while at the same time grappling with deep rooted theological promises towards God's chosen. At bare minimum, both Westermann and Wenham highlight that "Canaanites" are portrayed in a positive light by this text.[77] Moreover, even if the narrative is not intending to cast Abimelech as being in relationship with יהוה, the fact that God intervenes in the whole situation is a powerful statement regarding the sovereignty of God even among outsiders.[78]

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[74] Wolff, "Elohistic Fragments in the Pentateuch," 162.

[75] However, McEvenue argues that the narrative does not present Abimelech as having "fear of God" prior to his interaction with God, and therefore Abraham is justified in what he said. Contrarily, I would argue that יהוה's own admission of Abimelech's righteousness, along with Westermann's view that "fear of the Lord" meant for Abraham some kind of expectation involving right moral action militates against McEvenue's interpretation. It is worth noting, however, that McEvenue later notes that Gen 20 deals with "recognizing the fear of God among non-Hebrews." See McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," 321 nn. 12, 322. See also Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 99–100.

[76] I am indebted to my second reader, Dr. Andrew Perrin, for pointing this key fact out.

[77] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 321; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 72.

[78] McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," 328.

Source-Critical Discussion

This passage was held to be E by earlier source critics such as Noth, a position continued by Speiser,[79] especially given its use of dream revelation which is seen as one of the hallmarks of the E source, even though the revelation is in this case to a foreigner. This is also seen in Genesis 31:24 and Numbers 22:9, 20, both of which Noth categorizes as E. However, it should be noted that the categorization of these later passages likely occurs because revelation by dream is one of the widely used criterions for identifying the E source, and not necessarily because these passages share other similarities.[80]

That this passage is peculiar in the surrounding narrative should also give a clue to the reader that if this were simply another chapter in a developing Abrahamic narrative there are some questions that need to be answered. One of which, as highlighted by Lohr, is that at this point in the narrative, as it stands in the MT, Sarah is quite advanced in age and the assumption that Abimelech finds her physically attractive enough to take her from Abraham is problematic.[81] Nevertheless, writers throughout history have remained adamant that Sarah was indeed beautiful in her advanced age. Lohr notes both an example of this contention found in 1Qap Gen^{ar} XX 2–9 as well as several explanations that have been offered throughout history for how Sarah could remain beautiful, including that her continued beauty was a divine miracle much like her pregnancy at her age.[82] However, that this is part of a different source than other passages

[79] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 68; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 319; Speiser, *Genesis*, 151.

[80] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 321–22.

[81] Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 98.

[82] Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 98.

depicting her age offers a more convincing argument.[83] This point will be further addressed below when evaluating the value of diachronic analysis.

In addition, there are many scholars that argue for a relationship between this passage and other sister-wife passages in Genesis. Typically this passage is one of the hallmark "doublet" passages, in this case in conjunction with Genesis 12:10–20, that gave rise to the Documentary Hypothesis in the first place. Conversely there have been a growing number of scholars who see instead a dependency between these texts rather than them existing as independent versions of the same story. However, it is worth emphasizing that in the following discussion on dependencies, each argument is hypothetical as it is impossible to demonstrate with certainty that one passage's dependency is not actually reversed in these cases. Nevertheless, Westermann, following Van Seters, argues that Genesis 20 is dependent upon Genesis 12:10–20 and, therefore, not a parallel version, a position also taken by Wenham and McEvenue.[84] However, Wenham, while supporting the dependency of this text on Genesis 12:10–20, sides with Van Seters that this episode was not merely a supplement to J by a later writer, but was also redacted by J and is one of his sources.[85] Wenham bases his stance on Van Seters' analysis, the reference to יהוה in v. 18, and the similarities in theology between this passage and other J passages.[86] This theory, at least of the text bearing connections to some previous J material, is supported by Abimelech's seeming awareness of the Sodom episode.[87] It is even possible that the J

[83] It should also be noted that Wenham cautions that ancient notions of beauty may be different than what today's society would perceive and that as a result age may not be as much of a factor. This is certainly possible, but to me the source-critical viewpoint seems more convincing. See Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 288.

[84] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 318; Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 171–75; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 68; McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," 329.

[85] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 68.

[86] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 68.

[87] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 69; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 322; Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 101; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 18–50*, 58–59.

author/editor is deliberately contrasting the "righteous" nation of Gerar with the "unrighteous" nation of Sodom.[88]

If Van Seters' argument is to be accepted for the origin of J and its use of earlier sources, then this text would be one of the pre-J blocks of material composed subsequent to the fall of Samaria, but prior to the Judean exile. The text was then taken up by the exilic J author and woven into his narrative. If this is the case, then this block of text, along with Genesis 12:10–20, is one of the earliest depictions of outsiders found in the ancestral narratives and is also one of the most positive in its portrayal. Moreover, it is worth noting that under Van Seters' model these texts are not only the earliest texts to display interaction with outsiders but also some of the earliest texts in general in the Abrahamic narrative. This is significant because it would demonstrate an early interest in how the community of Israel was to relate to those outside their community.

Baden, on the other hand, argues that the E texts being supplementary to the J texts is untenable based on his analysis of various E and J doublet episodes.[89] He concludes that in most cases it makes little sense, if indeed the E author was acting in a supplementary manner, that the supposed supplements add little if any theological value and are also rendered redundant by their parallel episodes that still remain in the narrative.[90] Instead, he stands with Noth that these texts make the most sense as independent traditions emerging from a common background.

Regardless of whether the episodes are dependent on each other or not, they are in some way related and all of them display remarkable concern for outsiders. Nevertheless, we find here

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[88] Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 101.

[89] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 126.

[90] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 126. However, it is possible that the supplements were written with the intent to replace their counterparts but they were re-added to the narrative by a later editor, or that the three episodes are left in the narrative as a literary device in order to form a contrast. See a thorough discussion in Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 95–114.

one of the drawbacks to source-critical study: any number of explanations can be put forward, many of which each have merit in their own right but are in some regard mutually exclusive.

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

One of the key values of diachronic analysis was demonstrated in the source-critical discussion on this passage. In answer to a peculiarity concerning the text, that Abimelech would consider Sarah's beauty so great in her advanced age that he would take her as a wife, a view of different sources provides a coherent framework with which to interpret this peculiarity.

Moreover, if one takes as a starting point that this text is dependent upon Genesis 12:10–20 (a J-classified text), then it is worth noting that in this version of the story God's interaction with outsiders is far more substantial and positive than the antecedent text despite his enduring clear preference for his chosen. Although one would need to consider the overall trajectory of how outsiders are treated in the rest of the J Abrahamic narrative and beyond, such a comparison, given certain contextual assumptions (or solid arguments), would indeed yield valuable insights into how the view of outsiders and how they relate to the people of Israel and their God changed over time, whether positively or negatively. Once again the issue with this is one of certainty and whether or not this added value is enough of a payoff to offset the confusion and ambiguity that source-critical study entails and leaves the text in.

If this text is viewed as one of the earliest examples of Abraham interacting with outsiders, as noted above, then source analysis in this case would yield an understanding of how Israel viewed outsiders at a very early point in their history. This would be lost in a merely synchronic interpretation. Granted, a synchronic interpretation would still provide the nuances that the outsider/insider relationship should not be presumed to be one of being

shunned/favoured respectively. The richness that diachronic analysis would add is an understanding that though our views might start out positive, such as demonstrated by this text, they may develop into something more sinister and negative given the right circumstances (see for example the views of outsiders in Ezra and Nehemiah). Such a trajectory would offer a cautionary tale that exhorts us to perhaps examine more closely how our present presuppositions might be more the result of present circumstances than what is actually right.

However as was noted above, an analysis of this passage also demonstrates a drawback of diachronic analysis. While it does have the power to offer a cohesive framework for understanding the text and peculiarities therein, it at the same time opens the door to uncertainty.

Genesis 21: Hagar and Ishmael

Portrayal of Outsiders

The subsequent E passage displaying interaction with outsiders occurs in Genesis 21:8–21. This passage is the second of the Hagar doublets, where Hagar and Ishmael are again found in dire circumstances in the wilderness. Contrary to the first doublet (16:1–14, J), Hagar does not run away but is this time sent away by Abraham at the request of Sarah, who seems to be acting less out of jealousy and more out of a desire to protect the inheritance of her son.[91] This is also done with the approval of God who comforts Abraham that this will not be the end for Ishmael his son. Indeed, although God ultimately supports Sarah's seemingly heartless desire to send the

[91] For McEvenue, this passage deals with mixed marriages and is a forerunner to the endogamous views found in Ezra 9 and 10. See McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," 322. See also comments below in the P chapter on Genesis 16 and Hagar's marriage to Abraham. It is also interesting that though Hagar is a foreigner, she does not have foreign God's but is clearly portrayed by the narrative to have some sort of connection or relationship with יהוה. This is perhaps one reason why later audiences do not see this marriage as problematic. See Matthew Thiessen, "Aseneth's Eight-Day Transformation as Scriptural Justification for Conversion," *JSJ* 45.2 (2014): 232–35.

child away, citing that it is through Isaac that Abraham's line and blessing shall continue, he still blesses Ishmael with the promise to make him into a nation, part of the overarching promise given to Abraham. Van Seters states that, "God's blessing and providence extends beyond Israel to also include those who are expelled."[92] This promise serves as almost a foreshadowing that the dire circumstances will not be the end for Hagar and Ishmael as God has declared that he will become a nation before the reader encounters the trouble in the wilderness. Once again preference is demonstrated for the chosen, but great concern for the outsider is simultaneously displayed, a tension that has been repeated throughout the preceding analysis.

Westermann highlights that this story is a testament to God's care for the outcast, something Israel will experience first-hand in the exodus.[93] In this light, perhaps it is telling that the outcast helped by God is an Egyptian cast out by an Israelite, a reversal of the Exodus story, which perhaps demonstrates God's care for all outcasts regardless of their insider or outsider status. A curious feature of this text is that Ishmael is nowhere mentioned by name, but always as "the son of the slave woman," "the son of Hagar," or "the boy," even by יהוה when he is addressing Abraham and the angel when addressing Hagar.[94] However, the beginning of v. 17 in Hebrew contains what is perhaps a double-entendre meant to let the reader know that this is how Ishmael got his name when it says וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים ("Vay***ishma El***ohim"): "and God heard."[95] This is a curious feature given that this event, to which Ishmael seemingly owes his name, occurs much

[92] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 201.

[93] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 344.

[94] McEvenue notes that this is so God "can distinguish in this way the social relationship to Hagar from the theological relationship to Abraham." See McEvenue, "Comparison of Narrative Styles in the Hagar Stories," 75.

[95] Indeed, McEvenue highlights that this is a subtle writing style used by the Elohist writer in which the audience is left to discover the meaning of the name. See McEvenue, "Comparison of Narrative Styles in the Hagar Stories," 74, 76.

after Ishmael's birth.[96] This could lead to several different conclusions. The first is that this chapter, though occurring later in the overall chronology of the narrative, is a leftover story from much earlier in Ishmael's life (although the current construction of this narrative unit in which Ishmael is playing with Isaac militates against this). Secondly, it is possible that Ishmael originally had another name that is here "changed" in a similar manner that Jacob's name was, i.e. due to God's intervention.[97] Thirdly, the implicit mention of Ishmael's name is meant to be a confirmation of the explicit naming that occurred in Genesis 16:11 (J) when God heard Hagar's affliction. Or, similarly, the story is a way for the narrative to explain Ishmael's name in an after the fact manner, similar to how Moses' name is explained from a narrative perspective despite it likely being Egyptian in origin.

Source-Critical Discussion

Noth classified this passage as E, something agreed to by Speiser who bases his conclusion on a comparative study of each source's preoccupation with etymologies.[98] For example, according to Noth's classification, the name of Isaac is explained by J in Genesis 18:10–14, by E in Genesis 21:6, and by P in Genesis 17:17, while the name of Ishmael is explained by J in Genesis 16:11 and by E in Genesis 21:17. However, many scholars have since disputed Noth's, and consequently Speiser's, position of associating this passage with E. Westermann, while stating this passage is not J, does not think that it is E based on differences he

[96] It should be noted that a similar, and more explicit naming occurs in Genesis 16:11, though this is classified as the J source. Nevertheless, even if were these both part of a unified narrative, this prior naming makes the absence of Ishmael's proper name from the narrative here even more conspicuous.

[97] In support of this it is interesting that the name is directly related to the action or interaction of/with God, similar to the name Israel in Genesis 32, and that a name isn't directly mentioned (at least not initially), but meant to be inferred from the narrative. However, it is worth noting that unlike the Jacob/Israel example he isn't explicitly given the name Ishmael either.

[98] Speiser, *Genesis*, 157.

finds between this passage and Genesis 20.[99] However, McEvenue argues that these differences are not substantial enough and instead counters that the passages are largely similar in their overall narrative structure and the role of God in each, among other characteristics.[100] Wenham also views this material as E, although it has been redacted by J, a similar position he takes to Genesis 20.[101] Van Seters rejects that it is E because he sees this as determined solely on the basis of divine name usage and vocabulary which he rejects as useful factors in alone determining a passage's origin. Instead he posits that this passage is largely J in its theology and is also familiar with its parallel episode in Genesis 16 and indeed draws from it.[102] Van Seters also questions the foundation of Speiser's etiological arguments by noting that the etiological questions are secondary at best to the stories' concerns and at worst likely inserted later.[103] Consequently, Van Seters assigns this text to his exilic J author.[104] However, at least in this case, I would disagree with Van Seters' reasoning, in that the name Ishmael, and its associated meaning that God hears, is in fact the direct point of this narrative unit. A similar argument could be made for this passage's "doublet" in Genesis 16. That the passages are dependent upon one another need not preclude that they come from separate sources.

Contrarily, Nicholson challenges Van Seters' assertion that Genesis 21 is not an independent version of the Hagar saga by pointing out that if the author of Genesis 21 was aware of Genesis 16, the question becomes why not simply edit that chapter instead of writing a second

[99] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 338.

[100] McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," 317–23.

[101] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 79.

[102] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 197–202.

[103] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 199.

[104] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 202.

version of it.[105] While this is certainly a valid criticism, it does not consider the possibility of literary emphasis. Perhaps the author/editor/scribes of Genesis 21, if they were indeed aware of Genesis 16, desired to preserve a doublet while simultaneously shifting the focus of the story to Ishmael to emphasize that the promises given to Abraham were also being transferred to Ishmael.[106] That the meaning of Ishmael's name shifts from God hearing Hagar's affliction in Genesis 16 to Ishmael's in this chapter would support this contention. Moreover, McEvenue notes that the role of God in the narrative is different in this instance than in Genesis 16.[107] Whereas the Yahwist presents the deity as only intervening at the end of a story when the human dynamics have played out, the Elohist pictures God as part of the story from the beginning.[108] The concrete identities of the sources which the two chapters belong to notwithstanding, the evidence presented above again emphasizes the distinct aspects of different passages in the Abrahamic narratives thus strengthening the overarching explanatory power of source criticism, even when questions of dependency still loom.

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

The extent of the value of source criticism in this instance would again in part depend on when the text is dated and subsequently what historical context it is emerging from and in response to. For example, while the base meaning and importance of the text regarding our question of how insiders are to relate to outsiders is little changed by historical circumstance, this meaning would gain power and significance if it emerged in the exile as Van Seters argues. For

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[105] Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen*, 236–37.

[106] It should be noted that this argument is subjective and based on entirely literary concerns. It is possible that the author could have instead simply edited chapter to make the emphasis he desired.

[107] McEvenue, "Comparison of Narrative Styles in the Hagar Stories," 75.

[108] McEvenue, "Comparison of Narrative Styles in the Hagar Stories," 75.

if the ideas contained herein are rising from a cast-out people in their own right, then the message of this passage becomes resounding: just as God cared for and heard the cries of Ishmael, though he was an outsider, so too shall he also hear the cries of his people in exile who feel like they are outside of God's purview. Nevertheless, as was noted, even the overall discussion of the passage's distinct characteristics, despite not offering any resounding conclusions, contributes to the value of diachronic analysis.

Genesis 21: Covenant with Abimelech

Portrayal of Outsiders

In the subsequent occurrence in Genesis 21:22–34, Abimelech, who in this passage is described as a Philistine, makes a covenant with Abraham. This is the first of another set of doublets, the second of which occurs in Genesis 26, which is classified as J by Noth, where Abimelech makes another covenant with Isaac following the third of the sister-wife episodes in the ancestral narratives.[109] In this "version" Abimelech is confident in the existence and continuation of Abraham's descendants and is aware of his blessing by God.[110] In this way Abimelech becomes a source of external validation for Abraham's blessed status. Indeed, Wenham comments that it is often outsiders that seem to make concrete and confirm promises made to Abraham by God.[111] It is outsiders who sell him land for a burial place, giving him a physical claim on the land, and here it is Abimelech who acknowledges his blessing and

[109] Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 264.

[110] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 95.

[111] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 95. It is interesting that the trend in the Patriarchal narratives is one where it is Abraham and other insiders who constantly are putting God's promises in jeopardy and outsiders who are confirming them, whereas in the Exodus materials it is partially the opposite with the outsiders threatening the promises. See Fretheim, "Theology of the Major Traditions in Genesis–Numbers," 307–8.

confirms his right to the well, giving him a source of vitality in the land. Westermann highlights that the purpose for this narrative lies both in the veneration of Abraham and its applicability for later audiences as a description of how their dealings with other nations will transpire.[112] A possible interpretation is that other nations will recognize the blessed status of Israel and seek to make covenants with them so that in some manner they participate in the blessing of Abraham. Consequently, outsiders come to play a prominent, though perhaps unintentional, role in manifesting the blessings of God in Abraham's life.

Source-Critical Discussion

Noth holds this whole section of text to be E.[113] The episode seems to show knowledge of another interaction between Abraham and Abimelech in Abimelech's request to Abraham that, "…as [he has] dealt loyally with [Abraham], [Abraham] will deal with [him] and with the land where [Abraham has] resided as an alien." (Genesis 21:23b NRSV) Were this a stand-alone episode, this statement would make little sense as there is nowhere in this episode where Abimelech shows kindness to Abraham. The logical reference passage would be Genesis 20, which as seen above Noth classifies as E and would lend support to this passage's similar classification as E. Indeed, McEvenue argues that this passage appears to belong originally immediately after the Abraham-Abimelech episode of Genesis 20, but it is possible that it is in the order it is now because the Elohist meant it as a conclusion to a section that dealt with the relations between Hebrews and non-Hebrews.[114]

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[112] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 350.

[113] Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 264.

[114] McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," 322–23.

However, it is also possible that parts of this passage have been added by a later editor, who was aware of both this passage and Genesis 20, in an attempt to link it with the subsequent etiology of Beersheba in Genesis 26 as well as the previous interaction between Abraham and Abimelech. Such an editing would explain the connections between these chapters without the need to see them as coming from the same source. This will be further explored below in Van Seters' argument regarding Genesis 21:23. Similarly, many other scholars have debated the passage's general unity. Some scholars, such as Westermann and Wenham, avoid making definitive statements regarding the text while at the same time acknowledging the division among scholarship largely due to the perceived double etiology of Beersheba in it.[115] Westermann highlights that the portions of the text relevant to the covenant and Abimelech's recognition of Abraham's blessing are still attributed to E by many scholars, which lends support to Noth's classification especially given the view that this text shows knowledge of a previous E text as seen above.[116] Wenham, while pointing out the various opinions, instead prefers to deal with the text ultimately on practical terms as it now stands without "unnecessarily" fragmenting it into different sections.[117] Similarly, Speiser views the text as a nearly unified E passage, except for v. 33, and perhaps vv. 32 and 34, and finds no tension between the dual etiology seeing it as "characteristic of the times and certainly not inconsistent with the character of the *E* document."[118]

As indicated above, Van Seters on the other hand rejects the unity of this passage and argues that Genesis 21:25–26, 28–31a is separate from vv. 22–24, 27, 31b–34, with the former

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[115] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 346; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 91.

[116] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 346.

[117] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 91.

[118] Speiser, *Genesis*, 160.

group originally following immediately after Genesis 20:17 as a continuation to the Abimelech episode found there, and the latter belonging with Genesis 26 as part of what he calls the J source.[119] This would fit with the depiction of Abimelech's speech being dependent upon a previous interaction. Put simply, he sees the hand of a later editor who is responsible for haphazardly stitching together what were previous sources and etiologies and he separates these sources based on the defining characteristics of each etiology in Genesis 21. Van Seters implies that an earlier explanation of the meaning of Beersheba, belonging with the covenant material of this chapter, was that it meant "well of seven" to correspond to the seven animals given by Abraham to Abimelech in order to settle the dispute regarding the well. This would then indicate that the elements which correspond to the second etiology then belong to the later hand of the J author because of the Van Seters' association of Genesis 26 with J. In addition, in Genesis 26 the J author fleshes out the second etiology more clearly but has also woven aspects of it back into the received text of Genesis 21 to provide a link between the two narratives and covenants between Abimelech, Abraham, and Isaac.[120] Consequently, not only is the later J writer seemingly duplicating Abrahamic elements onto the story of Isaac, but is also retroactively inserting Isaaic elements into the Abrahamic narratives. Though Van Seters' argument is understandably complicated to grasp, it does seem to offer a possible, although still problematic, explanation for the linkage between this chapter and Genesis 20 and the seemingly confusing elements of Genesis 21's etiology for Beersheba. For example, the narrative describes

[119] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 184–86.

[120] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 185–86.

Abimelech and his commander leaving Abraham and returning to the "land of the Philistines" in v. 32 despite also implying that Abraham was already in "land of the Philistines" in v.34.[121]

However the argument's complication may also be used against it: why would an editor go to such lengths to link the two stories? For example, if, as Van Seters argues, Genesis 21:23 belongs to the later J hand, then its insertion would be an example of another attempt to link this episode not only to later ones but to earlier ones as well. If one were to accept that Genesis 21:23 came from the later J hand, this would also militate against Van Seters contention that the Ishmael episode in Genesis 21 also comes from this later J hand because Genesis 21:23 is only necessary to link this passage to Genesis 20 if it is already separated by the Isaac-Hagar-Ishmael narrative of Genesis 21. In other words, the problem with Van Seters' argumentation is why would an editor put the linking passage here in the first place if he is the one arranging these stories? Why pull vv. 25–26, and 28–31a out of their supposed context immediately following 20:17 and move them after other narrative episodes? If the goal was to link Isaac, the Isaaic, and Abrahamic narratives together on the basis of the double etiology, why not just simply insert those elements after the covenant episode that supposedly occurred following Genesis 20:17? To me, a simpler explanation is the overall association of both Genesis 20 and 21 with E which would explain the connection between them in a far less convoluted manner. The difficulties with the double etiology could then be seen as some sort of editing debacle, possibly even along the lines of what Van Seters is suggesting in some regard, but without the need to totally rip these passages out of their immediate context and ascribe them to a late, exilic writer. Indeed, Abraham's apparent flagrant disregard for making a covenant with Canaanites, or in this case

[121] It is, however, worth noting that even if these verses are moved to the hand of the later J writer and associated with Genesis 26 the issue still remains. In order to resolve this, one of these verses would have to belong with the earlier hand in Van Seters' classification.

Philistines in particular, seems to be a testament to the passage's antiquity, possibly to a time prior to the ethnic concerns of Deuteronomy.[122]

Consequently, if this episode is indeed E, it demonstrates a prominent role of outsiders in the E text to establish and manifest the blessing of Abraham by God. Moreover, the covenant between Abraham and Abimelech provides him with a source of vitality in and connection to the land which was promised to him in a similar way that the purchase of a burial plot for Sarah does in the P source. Of interest for the dating of the E source prior to the J source is that in this passage outsiders recognize and arguably seek to participate in the blessing of Abraham. Assuming a multi-source view, this is either demonstrating a foreshadowing of the blessing over Abraham in Genesis 22:18 (E), or possibly knowledge of the Abrahamic blessing given earlier in Genesis 12:3 in the J source. As a result, three conclusions for the dating of E are possible based on these two options: the J source predates the E source and this passage demonstrates a link to Genesis 12:3 because of a dependency by the E author on J texts; no light is shed on the date because it is simply a reflection of a commonly held tradition as demonstrated by Genesis 22:18; or the E texts predate the J texts and this E passage has been edited to link it back to the overarching J narrative.

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

McEvenue notes that the narratives dealing with Hagar and Ishmael's expulsion, Abraham's interactions with Abimelech, and the Binding of Isaac "…sensitively define how Israel should deal religiously with non-Jews."[123] While McEvenue does not make explicit the historical setting that may have caused such a concern to arise, knowing that it is a prominent

[122] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 93.

[123] McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," 322.

feature in the text can help more adequately reconstruct the possible historical context of the text. Moreover, looking at this text from a source-critical lens, whether certain of the exact details or not, allows the reader and interpreter to enter a frame of mind that understands that such texts did not form in a vacuum but were shaped in some regard by the times that the author/editor was in. In this case, it allows the reader to understand why Abimelech, an apparent king, is making a covenant with a wandering nomad: it is because Abraham represents the Israel that is to come and as such is an example of how the dynamics of international relations could, and perhaps should, play out in the author/editor's time. Finally, diachronic analysis once again offers a framework with which to explore, if not necessarily satisfactorily explain, discrepancies within the text such as the references to earlier episodes and the perceived double etiology.

Genesis 22: The Binding of Isaac

Portrayal of Outsiders

The final E episode in the Abrahamic narrative dealing with outsiders is the conclusion to the binding of Isaac story in Genesis 22:15–18. This episode is significant in that its connection with outsiders occurs within a repetition, with some variation, of God's promised blessing to Abraham involving "all the nations of the earth." This promise was previously described in the chapter on J occurrences. The significance of this particular blessing compared to earlier examples is that the object of the blessing shifts from Abraham to "his seed," or "his descendants." What was established for the reader previously throughout Abraham's life, that he is blessed and others can receive blessing depending on how they position themselves in relationship with him, is now extended to his offspring, a point which connects to the treatment

of Abraham by Abimelech in the previous chapter as seen through the lens of the author's contemporaries.[124]

Interestingly, Williamson, following Anderson, Blaising, and Alexander, makes a connection between the "seed" of Abraham that will be the source or mediator of blessing and the Davidic king, via Psalm 72:17.[125] This connection provides a retrograde legitimacy for the Davidic king as he is linked to the great patriarch and becomes in some manner the fulfillment of the words here in Genesis. This connection will be important when discussing the source-critical context of this passage below.

Source-Critical Discussion

While Noth attributes the entire binding story to the E collection, many scholars find the passage to contain at least two different elements or to belong to an author other than E.[126] This is often due in part to the usage of the divine name יהוה in what is otherwise viewed as an E passage. Wolff, however, comments that this usage of יהוה in an Elohist passage could simply be the Elohist allowing "the tradition find expression here."[127] Contrarily, Yerkes views the usage of יהוה in v. 14 as a later interpolation, with the original reading being אל יראה instead of יהוה יראה.[128] In support of a redactor editing texts, we can cite as an example the name change

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[124] For more on the linguistic elements of the blessing, such as the possible meaning of the hitpael, see the section in the above J chapter on Genesis 12:1-4a.

[125] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 169–70; Arnold A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms: Introduction and Psalms 1–72*, vol. 1 of *NCBC* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 526; Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1993), 168; T. Desmond Alexander, "Further Observations on the Term 'Seed' in Genesis," *TynBul* 48 (1997): 365–66. See also Craig C. Broyles, *Pslams*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (BakerBooks, 2012), 298 for the connection of the Monarchy to the Abrahamic covenant.

[126] Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 264; McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," 330.

[127] Wolff, "Elohistic Fragments in the Pentateuch," 163.

[128] Yerkes, "The Location and Etymology of YHWH YR'AH, Gn. 22:14," 137.

from Abram to Abraham. This name change is recorded only in the P source but the rest of the sources have clearly been edited around it. However, this then begs the question of why an editor would only add the divine name to a handful of passages rather than placing it everywhere, or, like with Abraham, only including it after it is revealed to Moses in Exodus.

More generally, Westermann posits that the binding narrative emerged later in the monarchy (Westermann holds to the traditional dating of the E source to monarchic times) when "fear of God" acquired a greater amount of significance for individuals. He also notes that vv. 15–18, which contains the variant of the Abrahamic blessing in question, emerged even later than the rest of the passage.[129] The view of this passage originating from the time of the Davidic monarchy is also supported by the above noted connection between the blessing of the "seed" of Abraham and the monarchy via Psalm 72:17. Friedman holds that while earlier verses in the chapter are indeed from E, vv. 11–15 have been inserted by a later redactor responsible for combining the J and E texts.[130] Such delineation, while presenting problems of its own, does solve the abrupt entry of a second speech by the angel which is pointed to as evidence by other commentators of vv. 15–18's secondary nature. Speiser is indecisive in crediting this section to E or J, although he does seem to hint towards J or a blend of the two.[131] Van Seters holds the entire episode to be from J (albeit his exilic J) and vv. 15–18 to be a unified part of the narrative.[132] Van Seters bases his conclusion on a recognition of J themes as well as his previous classification of the Genesis 21 Hagar-Ishmael story as J, a passage often used to support this

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[129] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 355, 363. A similar position is held by McEvenue, who views vv. 15–18 to be a later addition at a point in time in which, "…Israel feels totally united by defeat and radical exile, and when the time of Abraham is as distant and fabulous to them as is the period of King John, the Magna Charta, and Robin Hood to us." See McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," 330.

[130] Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 65.

[131] Speiser, *Genesis*, 166.

[132] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 230–40.

passage's E status.[133] However, as was seen above, Van Seters' contention that the Genesis 21 Hagar-Ishmael story is from J is not without problems. Wenham shares Van Seters' conclusion that vv. 15–18 are not simply later additions to the earlier narrative, although Wenham avoids formally identifying the passage with any particular source.[134] He bases his agreement with Van Seters on the contentions that without vv. 15–18 the test of Abraham is effectively purposeless, and that the chapter in its unified form also parallels both Genesis 21:8–21 and Genesis 12.[135] While it is possible to counter both Wenham and Van Seters' arguments on stylistic grounds that the convenient introduction of a second angelic speech seems to indicate a later gloss, Wenham notes, compellingly, that such an argument ignores passages such as Genesis 16:8–12 and Genesis 17 which each include multiple distinct angelic/divine speeches.[136] Emerton however rejects Van Seters', and thus also in part Wenham's, argumentation and although he does not affirm the secondary nature of vv. 15–18, does admit their secondary nature is probable.[137] Römer, on the other hand, goes further and affirms that vv. 15–18 come from a later hand.[138] Moreover, while Römer admits that the majority of the chapter could have been from a source that originally used the "Elohist" moniker (based off of other early textual attestation to the presence of Elohim instead of יהוה in the text, see also Yerkes above), this does not include the

[133] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 238. If Van Seters reclassification is accurate, then it shifts nearly all of the variants of the Abrahamic blessing to the J texts. This removes any possibility regarding the usage of the hitpael vs nifal in the Abrahamic blessings changing due to evolving linguistic properties, as they would all come from the same author. In this regard, the difference between the usages becomes solely one of the desired emphasis in each circumstance. This is the case unless the Abrahamic promise is itself an ancient tradition merely adopted by the J author, although one must ask why, if that is the case, the author did not standardize the language.

[134] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 102–3.

[135] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 102–3.

[136] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 102–3.

[137] Davies and Gordon, *Studies on the Language and Literature of the Bible: Selected Works of J.A. Emerton*, 476.

[138] Römer, "Abraham's Righteousness and Sacrifice," 7, 10.

portion of the text that here concerns us, which Römer resolutely argues is from a later hand, despite also arguing for the late date of Genesis 20–22 in general.[139]

Some interesting points are also raised by Römer regarding the dating of this text which merit mention here. If one views the overall story of the binding and the implication that it is in some sense a reaction to or a prohibition of human sacrifice in conjunction with other texts involving human sacrifice such as Ezekiel 20:25–26, then it is possible to obtain a clearer notion perhaps of when the text, and consequently the E source in general, may have been written. For example, both the story here and the passage in Ezekiel involve human sacrifice in a sort of test/punishment scenario that is not meant to actually reflect how things ought to be.[140] In this case, if the argument that Römer makes regarding the association of this story and the stark statement in Ezekiel regarding יהוה causing his people to be defiled through human sacrifice are to be accepted, then it is possible that this text is also an exilic text that came from the late Babylonian or early Persian period.[141]

Using a similar argument to Römer, Knohl argues that the point of the binding narrative is as a prohibition of human sacrifice.[142] The reason for the different usages of the divine name, he contends, is a deliberate attempt by the author/editor/scribe to juxtapose an earlier phase in Israelite religion where human sacrifice was deemed acceptable with the author's conviction, echoed by several prophets, that such a sacrifice was not acceptable.[143]

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[139] Römer, "Abraham's Righteousness and Sacrifice," 8–10. Römer here argues for a late date for Genesis 22.

[140] Römer, "Abraham's Righteousness and Sacrifice," 5.

[141] Römer, "Abraham's Righteousness and Sacrifice," 5–6.

[142] Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 108.

[143] Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 107–8.

Nevertheless, both Römer and Knohl's arguments, while interesting, fail to address the reality that human sacrifice may have been prohibited at multiple points throughout Israel's history, and not just in the exilic period. Further examination into when such a practice existed would be illuminating.

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

Diachronic analysis can be illuminating in more ways than simply setting the context of a narrative. For example, McEvenue, in a comparison seeking to demonstrate the Elohistic nature of Genesis 20–22, makes some keen observations regarding the intense human turmoil that each major episode in these chapters begin in.[144] While, granted, such a detail could be observed at a merely synchronic level without the need to appeal to a common author/editor, a source-critical analysis of these passages creates a ready environment where details like this can be noticed that might otherwise be ignored. As was noted above, perhaps this is a salient point to make regarding diachronic analysis: though it can be overwhelming and confusing in its own right, when used as a tool it can facilitate the reader to notice details that might have been otherwise missed when simply viewing the text from a synchronic perspective. In this regard, conducting some sort of source analysis is perhaps akin to reading the text in its original language. Though it can be at times confusing and disheartening, it forces the reader outside of their usual context and puts the text in a different light.

[144] McEvenue, "The Elohist at Work," 319–20.

Conclusion

Even if the arguments presented by Van Seters hold merit, and the only passages involving outsiders that remain with an "E type text" are Genesis 20, with the additions from Genesis 21, it is in my opinion significant that some of the most prominent and rich interactions, for example the Pharaoh and Abimelech stories from Genesis 12:10–20 and Genesis 20, would still be from an earlier time. This demonstrates, if nothing else, a very early growing consciousness among the Israelite people of the outsider and how they are to be conceptualized and approached. While the status of many of the texts observed above as E texts has been called into question, what has become clear is that whatever their classification, be they independent E texts, pre-J supplementary texts, or J texts, these writings present a clear message on how outsiders interacted with Abraham and his God. Where ignorance of God was assumed by Abraham, the foreign characters demonstrated a level of piety seemingly higher than Abraham himself, and although God shows clear preference for his chosen, often despite their behaviour, this preference does not exclude the possibility of great care and compassion for those outside the bounds of his chosen people.

What has also been demonstrated in the above analysis is that source criticism of the Abrahamic narratives opens many avenues for greater understanding of the text, both in interpretation and in understanding its development and final form. Specifically, diachronic analysis forces the reader to view the text as a dynamic element that has undergone tremendous development to come to its present form. This in turn frees the reader to explore connections and possibilities that would otherwise have gone unnoticed. However, as has been noted multiple times, this insight comes with many uncertain elements as well.

THE PORTRAYAL OF OUTSIDERS IN THE P SOURCE

Introduction

The following chapter will continue the case study by examining the instances in the P source, according to Noth's classifications, where outsiders are depicted. Once again, a general introduction to the P source will be followed by the detailed examination of each occurrence and a survey of the ongoing source-critical discussion related to the passage. Subsequently, a brief examination of the value of the Documentary Hypothesis for final form interpretation, or understanding the text as it stands, in each specific instance will occur.

Characteristics of the P Source

The most fundamental aspect of the Documentary Hypothesis is being able to differentiate between different sources through an analysis of their various themes, vocabulary, or historical connections.[1] Originally, due to its lack of usage of the divine name, the P source was seen to be part of the E source until scholars started noticing some curious features of different groups of texts within this source that caused them to stand out. So the question for P is: what makes it distinct? Baden notes that despite "widespread agreement on which texts are to be designated as priestly, the nature of P, as broadly defined, has remained an ongoing point of dispute."[2] As a result scholars often differ widely in what they describe as the characteristics of the priestly source. In terms of style and content, Brueggemann summarizes some aspects, in his view, of the priestly source: it contains "laws and regulations related to the proper ordering of the

[1] For an excellent presentation of the various features that distinguish each source, see Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 7–31. For a presentation of the priestly source in particular, see Jacob Milgrom, "Priestly ('P') Source," in *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al., vol. 5 of *ABD* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

[2] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 169.

cultic apparatus," its narrative sections generally contain little dynamic elements but contain a clear message, and "[t]he genealogies in the P tradition contribute to the concern of the traditionists for purity, symmetry, legitimacy and order."[3] Alternatively, Brett holds that the P source is "structured fundamentally around creation, Abraham and the cult."[4] Knohl states that, "Only in the Priestly Torah do we find a systematic avoidance of the attribution of any physical dimensions to God and of almost any action of God, save the act of commanding. The priestly thinkers attained an astounding level of abstraction and sublimity."[5] Friedman notes that, "P characterizes God as acting according to justice more than as acting according to mercy."[6] Moreover, P places a heavy emphasis on the centralization of worship.[7] Finally, Baden argues that to appreciate "the priestly document as it is, rather than judging it in the light of other sources, allows for a clearer understanding of P's artistry and intention."[8]

Regarding vocabulary and thematic statements, some variation of the phrase "be fruitful and multiply" (פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ) occurs fourteen times in the Pentateuch, ten of which are in the P source according to Noth's classification, with the other four examples, except for Leviticus 26:9 in the E source, not containing the dual aspect of fruitfulness *and* multiplication.[9] This phrase seems to almost be a desire to conquer or subdue the world through population expansion, which is

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[3] Walter Brueggemann, "Kerygma of the Priestly Writers," *ZAW* 84.4 (1972): 398–99.

[4] Mark G. Brett, "Permutations of Sovereignty in the Priestly Tradition," *VT* 63.3 (2013): 385.

[5] Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 9. See also Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 20–21.

[6] Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 12.

[7] Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 22–24.

[8] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 170.

[9] The ten examples in the P source include: Genesis 1:28; 8:17; 9:1,7; 17:6; 17:20; 28:3; 35:11; 47:27; 48:4; Exodus 1:7. Of the remaining four examples, three are in the E source (Genesis 41:52; Exodus 23:30; Leviticus 26:9) and one is in the J source (Genesis 26:22). Besides Leviticus 26:9, the examples not found in the P source only contain the first half of the expression regarding being "fruitful" and not a pairing of being "fruitful" and some kind of increase or multiplication. It is also worth mentioning that the usage of this word pairing and the correlating promise of progeny drops off sharply after the beginning of Exodus, which Baden points out is due to the fulfillment of the promise of progeny at the beginning of Exodus. See Joel S. Baden, "The Continuity of the Non-Priestly Narrative from Genesis to Exodus," *Bib* 93.2 (2012): 173.

overtly stated in the P creation narrative, and also what gets the Israelites into trouble with the Egyptians in Exodus. Indeed, Brueggemann views this phrase, with the five verbs that operate interconnected with it (be fruitful, multiply, fill, subdue, and have dominion), in conjunction with subduing creation as the center of the Priestly theology.[10] Westermann connects this idea of multiplication as the explication of blessing, in that blessing in the original sense had to do with fertility.[11] Further aspects of P's vocabulary are that it tends to use Elohim or El-Shaddai until Exodus 6:2–3 when the divine name is introduced to Moses.[12] In connection with the previous theme of physical increase and fertility, the usage of El-Shaddai in the patriarchal narratives always occurs in the context of the promise of blessing and fertility.[13] One final example is the usage of objects associated with cultic practice, such as the tabernacle and the "Urim and Tummim."[14] The tabernacle is mentioned almost exclusively in P passages, with only a few mentions in E passages and none in J (or D).[15] "Urim and Tummim" are also mentioned nearly exclusively in P.[16] These are just a limited selection of the available examples regarding P's vocabulary.[17]

All of these above contentions are not necessarily mutually exclusive, rather they represent what each scholar holds the emphasis and most distinctive elements of the Priestly

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[10] Brueggemann, "Kerygma of the Priestly Writers," 400.

[11] Westermann, *The Promises to the Fathers*, 19. This point of view emerges given Westermann's view that the concerns of a nomadic group (as Abraham is portrayed) would have been the establishment of an heir to continue the family progeny.

[12] Van Seters, *The Pentateuch*, 25–26.

[13] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 153–54.

[14] Friedman uses these references to help demonstrate the P is pre-exilic as these cultic elements were associated with the first temple, not the second. See Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 22–24; Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 174–87.

[15] *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 11.

[16] Friedman notes that Deuteronomy 33:8 is the sole example outside of P in the Torah. See Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 11.

[17] For a more complete list see Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 8–10.

source to be. Nevertheless, the wide array of opinions cogently demonstrates that in some cases the characteristics of a source are often in the eye of the beholder.

If there is a P Source, Is it a Contiguous Narrative or Fragmentary?

If one were to take the stance that a P source exists, there still remains the question of its composition. Is it a unified narrative that has been melded together with other sources, or is it a fragmentary collection of texts and stories, some of which are more coherent together than others, that have been inserted to supplement previous sources? These questions have emerged largely due to perceived "gaps" in the Priestly source as well as in discussions on the P source's relationship to the other classic sources.

The P source's interaction and dependence on other sources is a widely debated issue and largely depends on when one dates said sources. For example, Emerton argues that the P source was a separate source written by someone who knew JE, but rejected parts of it.[18] He also leaves open the possibility that the person who combined JE with P had a priestly outlook.[19] Baden notes that ultimately the answer to P's dependence on other sources is whether or not P can be read on its own or whether it requires the non-P texts to be comprehensible.[20] As a result, while admitting that when compared to the other sources P might be seen to contain gaps, he thoroughly argues that taken on its own terms it represents a complete, independent narrative.[21] Moreover, in regards to the Priestly source being constructed as a response to other sources, he also contends that any similarities between the priestly source and the other sources is not to be

[18] John A. Emerton, "The Priestly Writer in Genesis," *JTS* 39.2 (1988): 397.

[19] Emerton, "The Priestly Writer in Genesis," 398.

[20] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 179.

[21] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 179–88.

construed as some type of relationship between them but rather the drawing on of "national memory and tradition."[22] In this regard Baden stands firmly in the same tradition as Noth and other scholars who hold to the classic Documentary Hypothesis. Similar to Baden's arguments above, while Propp admits that there are admittedly holes in the P narrative when it is separated out from, and compared to, the rest of the Pentateuch,[23] he argues for its continuity: "Overall, I find it easier to believe that we simply lack a portion of the Priestly stratum, than that an editor voluntarily introduced repetition and self-contradiction."[24] Again, Baden, though he disagrees that there are gaps in P's narrative, agrees with Schmid and makes a similar argument for P's continuity, offering some cogent points regarding what can be defined as continuity.[25] Baden also notes that though the P source lacks material in comparison with other sources in the patriarchal narratives, it contains episodes that establish the main elements of importance for P: the blessing of progeny and land.[26] Indeed, Nicholson echoes this contention when he notes that the "main reason…for the literary structure of P arises from its author's distinctive theology. His main emphasis is upon the foundation of the theocratic community of Israel at Sinai; this…dwarfs all that precedes."[27] Put simply, the Priestly narrative has "gaps" when compared to the other sources because it has a different emphasis than the other sources.

Another dynamic that comes into play is whether the P source is itself a redacted text composed of other sources. Emerton argues this would make what is an otherwise contiguous

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[22] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 188–92.

[23] Propp, "The Priestly Source Recovered Intact," 464–66.

[24] Propp, "The Priestly Source Recovered Intact," 466.

[25] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 176; Baden, "The Continuity of the Non-Priestly Narrative from Genesis to Exodus," 162–65.

[26] Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 172.

[27] Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen*, 208.

source appear fragmentary in nature, especially when analyzed closely.[28] This is a powerful possibility, although it does possess the danger of making it impossible to identify a set of distinct sources if taken too far. As has been repeatedly demonstrated throughout the preceding discussion, under a very rigid understanding of the Documentary Hypothesis, in which the Pentateuch is made up of several independent original sources, the discussion becomes very murky when passages are analyzed at the verse level. This in turn causes the overall validity of the theory to be questioned. However, if each, or some, of the broader sources are in turn made up of fragmentary elements that were collected and redacted under a broad umbrella of said source, this would explain why lines get blurred when one zooms in to any detail as the fragments contained in each source begin to show through more clearly. Whybray points to this supposed usage of sources by the P source, as attested by other scholars, and even its apparent lack of theological unity as indications that the P source is much more fragmentary than those who support the Documentary Hypothesis profess.[29] Nevertheless, as was seen above, other scholars would seriously challenge Whybray's contentions and argue for the overall unified nature of the source. However, in order to determine whether the P source is contiguous or fragmentary, it must be investigated whether there is any narrative cohesion in the P source itself, regardless of what its own history of composition is.

It is important to note in light of the forthcoming discussion that the passages we are examining below do not offer the best examples of narrative cohesion available to argue in favor of a unified P source.[30] On the contrary, within the Abrahamic narratives, there are portions of the P narrative which appear incomplete. Propp gives the examples of "the birth of Isaac (Gen.

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[28] Emerton, "The Priestly Writer in Genesis," 385.

[29] Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 55–72, 108–11. Whybray himself does not make the overt claim that the P source is non-existent, but his presentation of other scholars' opinions points towards this.

[30] Propp, "The Priestly Source Recovered Intact," 461–62.

[21]:lb, 2b–5), followed by the death and burial of Sarah (Gen. [23]), followed by the death of Abraham himself and the succession of Isaac (Gen. [24]:7–1 la), followed by a list of Ishmael's descendants (Gen. [25]:13–18), followed by the marriage of Isaac (Gen[25]:20)," as demonstrating the abrupt transitions between P passages.[31] However, Propp also makes the following persuasive point:

> While these transitions strike us as slightly abrupt, they may not have been so for the author. After all, a continuous P passage, Gen. [35]:23–9, brusquely reports the birth of Jacob's sons (vv. 23–6), their return to Canaan (v. 27) and Isaac's death (vv. 28–9). Had these notices appeared separately in the composite text, we would have hesitated to claim that they had ever flowed together. This is important evidence that the Priestly Writer's sensibilities were not our own.[32]

For Propp, the most definitive passages demonstrating the narrative cohesion of the P source lie mainly outside the Abrahamic narratives, and almost exclusively outside the bounds of our present case study: "The parade examples are the Priestly sections of the Flood Account, the Table of Nations, the Plagues, the Crossing of the Sea, Manna, the Dispatching of the Spies and the Korah Rebellion."[33]

Nevertheless, there is one such example from the Abrahamic narratives which could demonstrate the narrative cohesion of P that is worth mentioning: the story of Terah's family from Gen 11:27b–31, 12:4b–5, 13:6,11b–12a.[34] These passages present a version of Terah moving from Ur with Abraham and Lot on the way to Canaan, but only making it as far as Haran. It continues with Abraham, at 75 years old, resuming the journey with Lot to Canaan, where they arrive and realize that the land cannot support them both together, so they separate. As part of the forthcoming discussion, reading this part of the Abrahamic narrative from the

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[31] Propp, "The Priestly Source Recovered Intact," 464.

[32] Propp, "The Priestly Source Recovered Intact," 464.

[33] Propp, "The Priestly Source Recovered Intact," 461–62.

[34] Propp, "The Priestly Source Recovered Intact," 462.

perspective of a coherent P source is relevant not for what it includes involving outsiders, but what is absent: In the received text Abraham's departure from Haran to Canaan is interwoven with the promise of blessing to outsiders flowing somehow through Abraham (12:1–3),[35] which sets the tone and stage of the narrative that follows. Whereas in this assumed P account, Abraham leaves with little fanfare or purpose which gives any interactions, positive or negative, he may have with outsiders a different frame of reference than the blessing theme that frames his departure in the text as it stands in the MT.

In addition, it is helpful to remember the above points regarding the author/editor's intent and focus behind the narratives and how it may dictate what merits inclusion in the narrative. This line of investigation would bear more relevance if our overall goal was to determine the validity of the narrative cohesion of any particular source. However, since our ultimate question lies elsewhere, it is sufficient to simply be aware of this limitation in the present study, while at the same time noting some implications which will be discussed below.

While it is not central, the foregoing discussion of P's narrative unity does bear some relevance to one of the larger questions this paper is trying to answer: the overall validity of the Documentary Hypothesis for final form interpretation. In the case of the P passages, what value is added to our interpretation of the portrayal of outsiders in the Abrahamic narratives when the scope and continuity of a tradition are not clearly defined within the passages we are interacting with? For if we cannot establish when a particular passage was written (which becomes easier if it can be successfully identified with an overarching source) then we are missing key pieces of the historical picture necessary to have a greater interpretive understanding of the possible authorial/editorial intent and how the text may have been understood by its ancient audience.

[35] See the discussion on Gen 12:1–4a above.

However, an important realization is that just because the answers are not clear in these particular passages does not mean that they will be unclear everywhere else. The Documentary Hypothesis and source criticism in general are not an end in and of themselves, but rather tools within an interpreter's toolbox that are used to better understand the text at hand. Moreover, as far as the present study is concerned, our scope may be too narrow to fully provide answers to all the mysteries of the Documentary Hypothesis. As a result, an area for further study would perhaps be to conduct a similar case study elsewhere in the Pentateuch and compare the results.

Historical Context of the P Source

If we assume the existence of the Priestly writer, when was the document formed, and how might that influence our overall discussion?[36] Of all the diachronic questions that would bear relevance to the discussion at hand, when the sources are written is by far the most influential and enlightening. It illumines not necessarily how the text portrays outsiders but why they are portrayed in the manner we see; it is from this that we can gain a glimpse into the historical circumstances that shaped the way the text is written.[37] Walter Brueggemann cogently offers both a note of caution when approaching the dating of texts as well as incentive to do so: "Clearly dating these traditions is not an academic exercise but is essential to the interaction between word and history."[38] By this he is stating that being able to place traditions into a

[36] For a more thorough discussion on the Priestly writer see Sean E. McEvenue, *Interpreting the Pentateuch* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 116–27.

[37] This is true regardless of the existence of a historical core within the story. This is an important distinction to be gleaned from present studies on social memory theory and historical memory. See Keith, "Social Memory Theory and Gospels Research"; Keith, "Social Memory Theory and Gospels Research"; Kirk and Thatcher, *Memory, Tradition, and Text*. In his two articles Keith lays out clear expectations regarding the legitimacy of separating a historical kernel from memory.

[38] Brueggemann, "Kerygma of the Priestly Writers," 409 n.38.

corresponding historical context is an important part of understanding both the development and meaning of a text.

As was seen in the preceding chapters, any discussion of date will necessarily revolve around significant events in the history of the Jewish people as such events are often considered the seedbeds of prominent writings. The event most relevant for the present discussion is the exile, specifically in this case the Babylonian exile, for it is in this exile that the Jewish people and writers not only endure a traumatic event, but in the process they come into shocking contact with a diverse culture. This is not to say that the exiles would have had no prior contact with this culture, but rather that it was suddenly the dominant culture. Such an event and contact would often have subtle and sometimes overt influences on elements of Israelite history and literature.[39] As a result the P source is often classified as pre-exilic, exilic, or post-exilic. The P source has traditionally been seen as the youngest source among J, E, and P, although as has been made clear in previous chapters, the traditional views have been challenged as of late. For example, based on comparisons between Genesis 17, the first significant P passage in the ancestral narratives, and other J passages, such as Genesis 12, some scholars would argue that P would appear to pre-date the J source.[40]

Some scholars who argue for, or assume, a pre-exilic dating of the Priestly source include Propp, Zevit, Kulling, Haran, Knohl, and Friedman.[41] Propp connects the Priestly source with Ezekiel, arguing that Ezekiel was aware of and used P, which, if Ezekiel is dated as pre-exilic,

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[39] See for example a comparison of the Chronicler's work versus the Samuel-Kings account in Kenton L. Sparks, *God's Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 101–4.

[40] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 19.

[41] Propp, "The Priestly Source Recovered Intact," 474; Zevit, "Converging Lines of Evidence Bearing on the Date of P," 510; S. R. Külling, "The Dating of the So-Called 'P-Sections' in Genesis," *JETS* 15.2 (1972): 67–76; Menahem Haran, "Behind the Scenes of History: Determining the Date of the Priestly Source," *JBL* 100.3 (1981): 329; Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, xiii; Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 188–89.

would also make the P source in some regard pre-exilic and necessarily prior to Ezekiel.[42] Furthermore, Propp holds that P is a "*protest* against the Temple hierocracy," is "implicitly antimonarchical" and that it likely originated in the late monarchic era, but achieved final form later in the exilic or post-exilic periods.[43] Zevit argues for P's existence, as a redaction, prior to D and therefore being pre-exilic. He gives a *terminus ad quem* of 586 BCE for P.[44] However it should be noted that Zevit assumes a pre-exilic date for JE and a 7th century date for D.[45] Haran similarly argues for a pre-exilic date, post-dating JE, but predating D, with the caveat that while the composition was prior to the destruction of the first temple it remained accessible only to a limited number of priests.[46] He substantiates this by pointing to the dichotomy in P between priests and Levites as representative of the time when priests from the north not belonging to Aaronic descent arrived in Jerusalem after the destruction of the northern kingdom.[47] Contrary to Zevit and Haran's contention of the priority of J over P, Wenham argues that J has been added to P in the received text.[48] Knohl dates the text between the building of Solomon's temple and the reign of King Hezekiah, based on the status of the priests at this time and correlations between the themes of the Priestly source and what he describes as "the great social and religious crisis of

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[42] Propp, "The Priestly Source Recovered Intact," 472. It is however, important to note that Propp makes no direct claim on the dating of P in this article. See Propp, "The Priestly Source Recovered Intact," 474 n. 60. For another description of the parallels between Ezekiel and P, see Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 15–16. Friedman also notes that the Hebrew of P precedes that of Ezekiel. See Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 22. Milgrom also argues for a dependence on P by Ezekiel and a pre-exilic dating for P. See Milgrom, "ABD," 458–59.

[43] Propp, *Exodus 19–40*, 732. (Emphasis original)

[44] Zevit, "Converging Lines of Evidence Bearing on the Date of P," 510. See also Brett, "Permutations of Sovereignty in the Priestly Tradition," 384.

[45] Zevit, "Converging Lines of Evidence Bearing on the Date of P," 485.

[46] Haran, "Behind the Scenes of History," 329–30.

[47] Haran, "Behind the Scenes of History," 331. Friedman also highlights the important distinction in P between Aaronid and Levitical priests. See Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 21–24; Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 188–206.

[48] Gordon J. Wenham, "The Priority of P," *VT* 49.2 (1999): 245, 250–51. Wenham, like Propp, does not try in this article to offer an absolute date of either J or P, but merely their relative dating in relation one to another.

the eighth century B.C.E." which was documented in the prophetic writings of Amos, Isaiah, and Micah.[49] He also points to a connection between the cult of the Hittites and Priestly theology as important evidence for the antiquity of the Priestly source.[50] Friedman makes a similar argument as Haran and Knohl, pointing to features in the text such as associations between the tabernacle and the first temple, in combination with P's emphasis on the tabernacle, as evidence that P was a pre-exilic writer in the time of the first temple.[51] Moreover, Friedman argues that P was not only aware of the combined text of JE, but was written by an Aaronide priest in response to that text.[52] Similar to Knohl, he even goes as far to narrow the date of its composition to the reign of King Hezekiah.[53]

In the exilic camp we find McEvenue, Westermann, Brueggemann, Blenkinsopp, Fretheim and Meyer.[54] Westermann posits that the P writer has structured his work with a Noachian and Abrahamic covenant, but no Sinaitic covenant, as the covenant between God and Israel takes place with Abraham.[55] McEvenue and Brueggemann argue that P was written as a

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[49] Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, xii–xiv, 10–11.

[50] Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 11. He describes a connection between the two that came via the likely Hittite origin of the Jebusite inhabitants of Jerusalem, who the priests in the Solomonic temple could have inherited traditions from.

[51] Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 150–206. It should be noted that other scholars, such as Wenham, argue that the emphasis on the Tabernacle demonstrates a *post*-exilic setting, not a *pre*-exilic one. See Wenham, "Composition of the Pentateuch," 169.

[52] Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 188–206.

[53] Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 210. Friedman also argues this dating based on linguistic elements of the Hebrew language used in comparison to other texts. See Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 7–8.

[54] McEvenue, *Interpreting the Pentateuch*, 127; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 38–39; Brueggemann, "Kerygma of the Priestly Writers," 401; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Abraham as Paradigm in the Priestly History in Genesis," *JBL* 128.2 (2009): 225; Terence E. Fretheim, "Priestly Document: Anti-Temple?," *VT* 18.3 (1968): 316; Esias E. Meyer, "Divide and Be Different: Priestly Identity in the Persian Period," *HvTSt* 68.1 (2012): 1–6. It is also worth noting that in his recent review of *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America,* Mark Smith notes a "consensus or near-consensus" for a sixth century date for the P source. See Mark Smith, "Review of *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*," ed. Jan C. Gertz, Bernard M. Levinson, and Dalit Rom-Shiloni, *Review of Biblical Literature* (2019): 2, https://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/12759_14229.pdf.

[55] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 113.

document of hope for those in exile.[56] In favor of his proposal for an exilic date, Blenkinsopp notes the following points: firstly, the narrative structure of P pivots on the place of worship, suggesting the existence of a temple (Blenkinsopp argues for the rebuilt temple of approximately 515/516 BCE, which would mean that a portion of the people had returned). Secondly, the land promise would have been relevant to those seeking to return from exile. Thirdly, there are similarities between Isaiah 40–55 and Genesis creation texts. Fourthly, the title אלהי השמים is used only in the Abraham cycle (Gen 24:3, 7) and Persian period texts (Ezra 1:2; 5:12; Jonah 1:9) and "corresponds to the title of the supreme Zoroastrian deity Ahura Mazda." Fifthly, the Aaronide priests are prominent in the P texts but do not appear in other biblical texts until Chronicles. In addition, Abraham himself is not mentioned in any texts "clearly dateable prior to the Babylonian exile," and Abraham's journey begins in southern Mesopotamia where Judean deportees were settled. Finally, there is a lack of Egyptian control or presence in Canaan which "militates against a background in the Middle or Late Bronze period."[57] Fretheim, while similarly arguing that P pivots around a place of worship, sees it instead as an exilic text written in part against the establishment of a permanent temple and alternatively advocating for a portable sanctuary.[58] Meyer is a bit more fluid than others on his dating as he dates the P source, and also the final redaction and production of the Pentateuch as a whole, more generally to the Persian period, extending from the exilic to the post-exilic time period. During this time period, he notes, "It should also be apparent that there were power struggles in Yehud between priests

[56] McEvenue, *Interpreting the Pentateuch*; Brueggemann, "Kerygma of the Priestly Writers," 401.

[57] Blenkinsopp, "Abraham as Paradigm in the Priestly History in Genesis," 230–34.

[58] Fretheim, "Priestly Document," 316.

and Levites, and between Aaronide and Zadokite priests. The winners of this power struggle produced the Pentateuch and the texts which we call P and post-P."[59]

In terms of post-exilic, Kenton Sparks uses elite emulation, where texts are written in order to provide legitimacy for a subjugated culture within a dominant one, among other arguments, to defend his view of P's late dating.[60] This is relevant to the dating of P sections as it is far more likely that such elite emulation would occur in a period of total cultural domination such as the exilic or the post-exilic periods, rather than simply an awareness of another culture while one's own culture is still relatively regionally dominant as would have been the case prior to the exile. Indeed, while it is true that Mesopotamian culture enjoyed a long tenure as elite, emulation in Israelite literature only begins in earnest during the exilic and post-exilic periods.[61] However, Sparks is careful to note that this explosion in emulation alone is not enough to support his position of a post-exilic date. Rather, he uses other more securely dated literature to argue for a post-exilic date: "Regarding Israel's temple, sacrifices, and priesthood, and regarding other matters, including linguistic developments, the evidence strongly suggests that the Priestly Pentateuch dates after Deuteronomy, DtrH [Deuteronomistic History], and Ezekiel, so that P's theology fits precisely into that period where we find the text that is most like it: the postexilic Chronicler."[62] Against those who would argue an earlier pre-exilic date for P, Sparks notes that the early elements in P do not indicate that the entirety of P is early, but rather that it "…did not

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[59] Meyer, "Divide and Be Different," 6.

[60] Kenton L. Sparks, "Enūma Elish and Priestly Mimesis: Elite Emulation in Nascent Judaism," *JBL* 126.4 (2007): 625–26.

[61] Sparks, "Enūma Elish and Priestly Mimesis," 643–44.

[62] Sparks, "Enūma Elish and Priestly Mimesis," 645. Lest he be charged that he is simply following the old evolution of religion school in using such an argument, Sparks makes the following salient point: "Though it is true that the late date assigned to P by nineteenth-century scholars stemmed in part from a now defunct Hegelian (and sometimes anti-Semitic) view of history, their scholarly instincts were not wholly mistaken. If we collate the evidence from Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH), Ezekiel, and Chronicles, it is not at all difficult to recognize certain historical developments in the religious ideas and institutions of ancient Israel, nor is it difficult to see how P fits into that history." Sparks, "Enūma Elish and Priestly Mimesis," 644–45.

appear *de nouveau* but was itself a development of older traditions and texts, of the sort that stood behind the prophecies of Ezekiel and the laws of the Holiness Code."[63] Finally, Sparks looks to the differences between P and non-P depictions of Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh's army in the Exodus narrative. In non-P versions, Sparks argues that there is a less stark motif of split waters than in the P version which was possibly the result of an emulation of Enuma Elish.[64]

What should be evident from the preceding discussion on the dating of the P source is that there are many scholars who hold vastly different views, with supporting arguments, for when the source was written, or edited. Nicholson offers a helpful reminder, similar to Sparks, that regardless of whenever one dates the P source, it is important to remember that it "was not spun out of thin air in the exilic or post-exilic period, but embodies more ancient tradition, especially laws."[65] Nevertheless, each of these different views above will have a slightly different nuance as to how we interpret P's depictions of outsiders. In a pre-exilic setting, Abraham's depiction as the "father of a multitude of nations" becomes a forward thinking statement of the Israelites centrality in the divine narrative of the world and demonstrates a remarkable level of concern and sense of connection with the nations around them. However, in a post-exilic setting, such a depiction becomes rather an urgent cry for relevance and hope to a culture that is rebuilding after being on the verge of collapse. Suffice it to say for now that while clearly understanding a date for P is important to understanding the text as we have received it, such an understanding may not be ultimately possible and the search for it may serve to bewilder many interpreters.

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[63] Sparks, "Enūma Elish and Priestly Mimesis," 645. Zevit makes a similar point. See Zevit, "Converging Lines of Evidence Bearing on the Date of P," 484.

[64] Sparks, "Enūma Elish and Priestly Mimesis," 637.

[65] Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen*, 220.

Textual Context of the P Source

According to Noth's classification, the P source begins in Genesis 1 with a creation narrative, and occurs for the first time in the Abrahamic narratives in Genesis 16 with a few verses on Hagar's marriage to Abraham. The first major occurrence is the covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17 and is one of two major P episodes in the Abrahamic narratives.[66] More major blocks of P text occur as one moves into the cultic law sections of Exodus and Numbers.

Occurrences of Outsiders in the P Source

The discussion now moves to the heart of our present study: evaluating the portrayal of outsiders in the Abrahamic narratives in the P source for the purpose of determining the value of the Documentary Hypothesis for final form interpretation. We will begin briefly with Genesis 16 before moving on to the two main occurrences in P, Genesis 17 and 23.

Genesis 16: Marriage to Hagar

Portrayal of Outsiders

The number of passages involving outsiders that Noth classified as P are few, but significant, in the Abrahamic narrative. The first two minor ones occur in Genesis 16:1a, 3, 15–16 and reference the marriage of Abraham and Hagar and the subsequent birth of Ishmael. The only salient point which perhaps can be made comes by way of what the text doesn't say: the narrative has no qualms regarding the marriage of Abraham to a foreign slave girl in order to

[66] For more on the "incomplete" nature of the P narratives in Genesis, see the section "If there is a P Source, Is it a Contiguous Narrative or Fragmentary?" above.

produce an heir. Possibly this is because the focus is not on ethnicity, but rather the continuance of Abraham's lineage.[67]

Moreover, it is possible to surmise that this passage, along with the J material dealing with Hagar, comes from a very different perspective than the writers of Ezra-Nehemiah and their focus on endogamy.[68] A comparison between these two perspectives would offer a window into how the Israelites saw their relationships with outsiders vary over time and space. If this passage, and P in general, is dated as post-exilic as Sparks argues, then it would provide an interesting context within which to interpret the similarly post-exilic and contrary endogamous views of Ezra-Nehemiah, thereby providing a nuanced view of post-exilic religious and cultural views. Similarly, if the P material is dated to the exilic or pre-exilic time, then a similar comparison could demonstrate how the return to the "land" after exile and the threat of cultural erosion had a possible dramatic effect on how the Israelites saw themselves in comparison to the "other."[69]

Source-Critical Discussion

The majority of the material in chapter sixteen dealing with Hagar is attributed to J by Noth, with P offering only a cursory historical notification that Abram received Hagar as a wife and then the subsequent birth of Ishmael. Despite the classification of these cursory notes as

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[67] It is also possible that the narrative does not comment on the matter because of the nuances and status of women in a largely patriarchal society.

[68] For another interesting comparison and defense of Joseph's marriage to a foreign woman, see Thiessen, "Aseneth's Eight-Day Transformation as Scriptural Justification for Conversion."

[69] As can be seen in many of the documents found at Qumran, these endogamous views continue throughout the second temple period, especially in Aramaic texts, possibly providing a window of insight into the effects of a dominant culture and the fear of lost Jewish identity. C.f. *Aramaic Levi Document* (*ALD*); 4Q213a 3–4, 6–7; 4Q542 1 i 8–9; 4Q549; 4Q545 1a i 5–6; 4Q202 1 iii 6–10; 1QapGen; Tobit 7.10. See also Joseph L Angel, "Reading the Book of Giants in Literary and Historical Context," *DSD* 21.3 (2014): 326; Machiela and Perrin, "Tobit and the Genesis Apocryphon," 121–26; Hanna Tervanotko, "Members of Levite Family and Ideal Marriages in Aramaic Levi Document, Visions of Amram, and Jubilees," *RevQ* 27.2 (2015): 155–76. I am grateful to Shelby Bennett for pointing me to these texts.

being P, recent scholars have downplayed their origins as P fragments, with some, Van Seters for example, arguing that they are critical parts of the overall narrative and thus not simply later glosses.[70] If this were the case, then the points above would still stand, although which timeframe they provide insight into would depend on the dating of the other material in the chapter.

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

However, in terms of the value of diachronic analysis for the interpretation of these specific passages, it must be said that when the text was written or which source it may or may not come from does not change the understanding that Abraham marries a foreign slave girl, produces a potential heir, and that the text says nothing overtly, good or bad, about this event in this passage.[71] At its core it is treated as a non-issue. The Documentary Hypothesis in this case would merely add additional insight into the cultural practices of the specific time it is dated to, and an understanding of why the marriage is treated in such a non-controversial nature, given the increasing focus on endogamy in later texts.

[70] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 5.

[71] It may be possible to read the subsequent chapters and the birth of Isaac as a rebuke of Abraham's, and Sarah's, attempt to provide their own answer to the problem of childlessness, however, even such a reading makes no comment specifically on the ethnicity of Hagar being an issue, but rather that it was through a son given to Sarah that God had chosen to establish his ongoing covenant. Indeed, in the J account, see the discussion on Genesis 16 in the J chapter above, where God deals more directly and kindly with Hagar than he does with Sarah, at least up until this point in the narrative. Contrarily, one could also posit that the reason that Isaac is favoured over Ishmael is specifically because he is born of a woman that is not from Abraham's family, though this is not made explicit by the text.

Genesis 17: Covenant Ceremony

Portrayal of Outsiders

The first major occurrence of Abraham's interaction with outsiders comes in Genesis 17 as part of the covenant of circumcision. In Genesis 17:4 Abraham is promised to be the ancestor of nations. The specific Hebrew word is גּוֹיִם which is most often used to reference different nations which have territory and monarchic sovereignty.[72] In its most basic sense, this promise gives not only the nations a claim on Abraham, by way of lineage, but also Abraham on the nations: Abraham will be the head of a great family. In the context of a nomadic clan, this promise provides an abundant assurance of security that the family will endure. "The promise of a son, to which the other promises are attached, is the guarantee to Abraham of the life of his family."[73] Moreover, in connection with one of the major P themes discussed above, in this promise Abraham will be enabled by God to fulfill the creation mandate of Gen 1:28 and 9:1, "be fruitful and multiply."[74] In his fatherhood of many nations, the nations are provided with a connection to the spiritual father of the Israelite faith. Williamson points out that this connection and role of "spiritual father" does not necessarily mean physical descent, as only Edom and Israel can trace their lineage back to Abraham and Sarah (since the promise to bear kings was given also to her), but could also refer to Abraham being the mediator of divine blessing, such as

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[72] Brett, "Permutations of Sovereignty in the Priestly Tradition," 386. For a more expansive survey of the usage of this term in Israelite theology, see the rest of the article. The conclusion is worth quoting at length: "In the case of the priestly tradition, it is evident that the imagination of sovereignty has adapted the older political terms like גוי and ברית, and perhaps even קהל, and invested them with a more expansive covenant theology that served Israel's identity, both within the narrow borders of the land and further afield. The threats to Israel's political sovereignty in history did not imply the loss of sovereignty as a concept, or perhaps its recovery only in the eschatological visions of the prophets, but rather, a transformation of political terminology that contested the rule of empires."

[73] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 29.

[74] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 163.

Joseph was to Pharaoh.[75] It is worth noting that this dynamic of "spiritual fatherhood" is not implied directly in Genesis 17 but is a reading in light of the rest of the ancestral narratives. Matthews highlights how the promise to be an ancestor of nations is fulfilled in the narrative through the lineage of Ishmael (Gen 17:16; 25:12–17), and the kings of Edom (Gen 36:9–13).[76] However, Diffey argues that each time the promise of kingly descendants occurs there is in view a "royal and rejected seed" which would seem to weigh against Matthew's inclusion of Ishmael and his descendants as evidence of this promise.[77]

Similar to the promise of Genesis 17:4 is the statement in Genesis 17:6 that nations and kings shall come from Abraham. Here, in the context of the subsequent verses describing Abraham's descendants inheriting the land, the promise may be pointing forward to the monarchy of Israel given the above noted monarchic dimension to the word גּוֹיִם, besides the obvious implication that with the fathering of nations would come the fathering of kings. Specifically, it may be insinuating that the descendants of Abraham who inherit the land will be defined by the idea of kingship, something possessed by the other great nations.[78] This possibly is pointing forward to a time of pride in Israel's history, when God took them from a single wandering nomad to having a king recognized by nations around them. Perhaps this is also part of a nascent longing to return to this time by looking back at the promise of God to make it so, as argued by Blenkinsopp.[79]

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[75] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 157–58.

[76] K. A. Mathews, *Genesis*, vol. 1A–1B of *NAC* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 202.

[77] Daniel S. Diffey, "The Royal Promise in Genesis: The Often Underestimated Importance of Genesis 17:6, 17:16 and 35:11," *TynBul* 62.2 (2011): 313–16.

[78] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 22.

[79] Blenkinsopp, "Abraham as Paradigm in the Priestly History in Genesis," 508.

In Genesis 17:16, the promise of nations and kings is similarly applied to Sarah, and it is made evident that the promise of nations and kings shall come through the line of her promised future child. According to Westermann, who focuses heavily on the nomadic needs of Abraham and his family, the blessing is centered on giving Sarah a child in order to continue the family line.[80] However, despite this focus on Sarah's future child Isaac, Blenkinsopp notes that Ishmael is not entirely forgotten: "Ishmael remains, nevertheless, a pivotal figure, intimating a broader and more inclusive idea of the Abrahamic covenant, one entirely in keeping with the universalism of the Priestly History."[81]

An Excursus on Circumcision

Circumcision was a very widespread practice in the ancient world,[82] and as such it may be useful to conduct a brief foray into how the Israelite practice of circumcision differed from its common practice and what its intended purpose may have been. In other words, can Abraham's relationship to the nations and outsiders be discussed in terms of customs common to those around him that are reinterpreted in a different covenantal context? For instance, is there anything to be gleaned from a comparison between when circumcision was prescribed to be performed in Genesis 17 as opposed to contemporary ancient practices where it was performed as a rite of passage at puberty or before marriage?[83] Would those reading the text of Genesis 17

[80] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 266.

[81] Blenkinsopp, "Abraham as Paradigm in the Priestly History in Genesis," 238. It could be argued however, that Ishmael is only blessed because of his connection to Abraham and that the main focus of blessing remains the "chosen" descendent Isaac.

[82] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 265; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 23; Mathews, *Genesis*, 198–99. For a presentation of the antiquity of circumcision demonstrated by archaeological discoveries, see Jack M. Sasson, "Circumcision in the Ancient Near East," *JBL* 85.4 (1966): 475–76. For a discussion of the text critical issues in Genesis 17, see Thiessen, "The Text of Genesis 17:14," 625–42.

[83] Sasson, "Circumcision in the Ancient Near East," 474.

and the covenant of circumcision contained therein be aware of some significance that is lost on modern readers, especially in regards to how the covenant makes Abraham relate to others?

According to Westermann, the most common reason for circumcision in the ancient world was as an initiation rite at puberty.[84] However Genesis 17 makes it explicit that the circumcision of newborn boys is to happen when the child is eight days old. As to why specifically eight days, Westermann notes that it is simply a "lucky number" whereas others, such as Matthews and Thiessen, note that the new mother (and presumably the newborn infant as well) is unclean for seven days and it is therefore on the eighth day when the child is pronounced clean and able to be then dedicated to the Lord through circumcision.[85] This view that the child shares in the mother's uncleanliness of seven days may offer a hint as to when this composition emerged. Matthew Thiessen points out that such a view only appears overtly in the second-temple period.[86] It is also interesting and perhaps significant that Isaac, as the chosen continuance of God's covenant here in chapter 17, is circumcised on the eighth day whereas Ishmael is circumcised likely around puberty (13 years old) which would match the general societal trend of the time of entry into the tribe. In this way Isaac prefigures future Israelites by descent who enter into the covenant at birth and Ishmael prefigures those outsiders who enter in at a later time by choice.[87]

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[84] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 265. See also Sasson, "Circumcision in the Ancient Near East," 474.

[85] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 266; Mathews, *Genesis*, 204; Thiessen, "Aseneth's Eight-Day Transformation as Scriptural Justification for Conversion," 237–38; Hector Avalos, "Circumcision as a Slave Mark," *PRSt* 42.3 (2015): 273. For more on the impurity of the mother and child in an ANE context, see Matthew Thiessen, "Luke 2:22, Leviticus 12, and Parturient Impurity," *NovT* 54.1 (2012): 19–27.

[86] Thiessen, "Luke 2," 24–25. If Thiessen's argument is given merit, then it is worth noting that Leviticus 12 would also share the conclusion that the child was unclean for seven days, thus providing an earlier example of the practice.

[87] See further the discussion below on the function of circumcision as a marker of the community.

In terms of its possible function as an identity marker, Williamson points out that circumcision was not a particularly useful identification sign to distinguish insiders from outsiders in the patriarchal period and later as it was also practiced by those outside Israel, besides the fact that it is not readily evident from a social perspective.[88] Indeed, it is not what one would exactly call an overt symbol. Instead, Williamson argues that it was meant as a reminder for the person on whom it is performed of the "…promissory and obligatory aspects of [the] covenant between God and Abraham."[89] For Israel, the circumcision advocated for by Genesis 17 was to function as a mnemonic device. Because many nations outside Israel practiced circumcision and the females were not circumcised it is "difficult to interpret circumcision in Genesis 17 either as a badge of identification or an initiation or ratification rite. The first makes the covenant too broad; the latter makes it too narrow."[90] Similarly, circumcision may serve a similar mnemonic function for God, vis à vis the rainbow, of his promises to Abraham regarding progeny, though this is less prominent than its function as a reminder for humanity.[91] As a result of this mnemonic function both for humanity and to a lesser extent for God, for Williamson "the rite of circumcision did not establish the covenant; rather, through this rite the substance of the

[88] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 178. Contra Avalos who sees circumcision as an identifying marker of slaves. See Avalos, "Circumcision as a Slave Mark."

[89] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 178.

[90] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 185. See also Mathews, *Genesis*, 198. This would be a useful area for further study in light of recent Pauline studies and perspectives that paint circumcision as precisely what Williamson here declares that it would not be useful as. Ironically, one of the main reasons that Williamson notes for circumcision's relative ineffectual nature as an identity marker, that it was also relatively common in surrounding nations albeit in different forms, could have become far less relevant as surrounding cultures abandoned the practice, especially in light of the region's subsequent Hellenization. Over time, this would have enabled circumcision to become exactly what Williamson argues it was not: an identity marker of the Israelite community, albeit only for male members. See Martin Abegg, "4QMMT, Paul, and 'Works of the Law.,'" in *The Bible at Qumran: Text, Shape, and Interpretation*, ed. Peter W. Flint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 203–216; James D. G. Dunn, ed., *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

[91] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 178–81; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 24.

covenant was maintained from one generation to the next."[92] Williamson is arguing that circumcision is not the covenant itself, but "the most basic obligatory element of this particular covenant."[93]

Somewhat contrarily to Williamson, McEvenue argues that circumcision does serve as an identity marker of who is "Jewish" and who is not, but it does so in a way that circumcision in Genesis 17 "extends the definition of Jewishness, the sphere of special divine providence, to include all those who are duly circumcised. Judaism becomes, not a racial or political society, but a liturgically determined religious society."[94] In regards to our overall case study on how Abraham's relationship with outsiders is portrayed in this instance, this aspect of circumcision would render nearly moot the category discussion of insider and outsider, as the outsider is enabled to become an insider. Westermann similarly agrees that circumcision of the whole household including foreigners and slaves has an openness about it in which others are allowed to participate in the worship of Yahweh, through the religious rite of circumcision.[95] This point of inclusion is similarly echoed by Williamson:

> It is not just the physical descendants of Abraham who will be incorporated within this covenant, but all to whom the sign of the covenant is applied. Thus the multitudinous numbers envisaged in Gen. 17.2 will include more than Abraham's physical descendants; the numerical increase will apparently come about through all who will align themselves with Abraham by submitting to the conditions of covenant, primarily expressed through circumcision.[96]

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[92] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 185.

[93] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 185.

[94] McEvenue, *Interpreting the Pentateuch*, 124. It is worth noting that others would argue that this type of inclusive view did not emerge until the second century B.C.E. See Thiessen, "Aseneth's Eight-Day Transformation as Scriptural Justification for Conversion," 247.

[95] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 266. It is perhaps worth considering the implications of this acceptance of outsiders as insiders which on the one hand displays incredible tolerance, and on the other hand is not the same as simply accepting outsiders without forcing them to first become insiders, even if the path to become an insider is open to all.

[96] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 182–83. See also Walter Brueggemann, "Genesis 17:1–22," *Int* 45.1 (1991): 57–58.

These conditions which those entering into the covenant accept also include, according to Williamson, an obligation to also conduct themselves in a way akin to what is demanded of Abraham in Genesis 17:1b: "'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless.'" (NRSV)[97] However, it is important to realize that conceiving of circumcision in this way, as an entrance right into a community, presupposes the existence of a community, which could betray that this covenant is either a retroactive element from a later time or a forth-telling of what will be.

There are then two ways to read and interpret the covenant of circumcision in this passage: prophetically, i.e. predicting the formation of a community or "people" to whom God promises possession of the land and to be their God, or as a text that comes after the formation of the community and is used to tie a covenant practice back to a prominent ancestor and possibly allow an entrance rite for outsiders.[98] As is likely evident, the majority of scholars advocating for some version of the Documentary Hypothesis would advocate for the second option. Indeed Westermann highlights that the "covenant" in Genesis 17 is a mutual covenant, rather than a

[97] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 182–83. See also Knohl who claims this as a condition of the covenant. Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 166 n. 52. For the translation of תמים as "blameless" instead of its more basic translation of "whole" or "intact" that is often used in the P source, compare Genesis 6:9 (P) where Noah is described as righteous and "blameless." See also Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 170; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 20; Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 174–76; Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 181–82. Alternatively, Westermann argues that the meaning is neither moral nor religious, but entirely secular and "whole" would be a more accurate translation. See Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 259.

[98] In his article on this passage, Matthew Thiessen makes an interesting point that the original text of Genesis 17:14, as evidenced by the LXX and SP, was far less open to this possibility of outsiders entering the community through circumcision as it only allowed circumcision within the eight day window after birth. Thiessen argues that the absence of the eight day stipulation in the MT of Genesis 17:14 is possibly the result of a scribal omission in order to make the text more theologically palatable. See Thiessen, "The Text of Genesis 17:14," 636–40. For another related example of Gentile entrance into the Israelite community, in connection with the rite of circumcision, see Thiessen, "Aseneth's Eight-Day Transformation as Scriptural Justification for Conversion," 238–39.

mere promise to Abraham, and is therefore meant, in his view, as for the Israelite people, which is especially demonstrated by the phrase "I will be your God."[99]

Source-Critical Discussion

The opinions on Genesis 17's identification with the P source, in whole or in part, are divided in scholarly circles. Some are ambivalent, noting a lack of clear evidence one way or another, some argue for its identification with P, and some are against its identification with P. In terms of the rational to identify this chapter with P: it bears similar vocabulary to numerous other passages ascribed to P.[100] For example, some variation of the phrase "be fruitful and multiply" occurs eleven times in Genesis, nine of which occurrences are commonly held to be P (the other two occurrences are J from and E, with both these leaving out the multiplication aspect of the command/blessing).[101] Moreover, P tends to use "Elohim" or "El-Shaddai" until Exodus 6:2–3 where יהוה introduces his name to Moses, and "El-Shaddai" is how the deity introduces himself to Abraham at the beginning of this chapter.[102]

In the ambivalent camp, Wenham will serve as a salient example of one who argues that the case for Genesis 17's identification with P is not "clear cut."[103] Wenham's objection revolves around the chapter's apparent connection with the J material around it, so much so that he concludes that if Genesis 17 was once independent it has been reworked by J as will be further

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[99] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 113.

[100] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 18.

[101] Genesis 1:28 (P); 8:17 (P); 9:1 (P); 17:6 (P); 17:20 (P); 26:22 (J); 28:3 (P); 35:11 (P); 41:52 (E); 47:27 (P); 48:4 (P).

[102] Van Seters, *The Pentateuch*, 25–26.

[103] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 18.

explored below.[104] It is worth observing that this objection to its identification with P has more to do with the prevailing view that P is later than J than it does with a rejection of arguments detailing the passage's P like features.[105] Wenham's ambivalence is summed up in that he views the promise material in Genesis 17 (which may or may not be P) is "cast in patterns attested in neighbouring J sections."[106] As a result, Wenham's picture of Genesis 17 is one where it is possible that it belongs to the P source, but if it does belong to the P source, then it may influence how scholars date the sources relative to each other, with J being later than P.

Those who argue for Genesis 17's identification with P include, among others, Westermann and Brueggemann. Westermann sees Genesis 17 as the center of P's patriarchal narrative in its theology and themes.[107] By seeing Genesis 17 as part of an exilic P source, Brueggemann views it as a response to the crisis of the exile by establishing "stability and continuity through socio-cultic institutions."[108] As a result, the establishment of circumcision is read through the eyes of an exilic community who is not only struggling for their own source of identity, but also looking for examples of how to relate to those around them.[109] Such a view does have the benefit of fitting with what would have been a likely more cosmopolitan worldview as the result of exposure to a dominant culture in the exile.

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[104] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 19.

[105] Indeed, Wenham comments the following on the relationship of this chapter and the dating of P as a source: "Thus the centrality of chap. 17 within the overall patriarchal narratives and the evidence of J-like redaction suggest, contrary to dominant critical opinion, that the material is early and that if it comes from P, P antedates J." Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 19. However, in terms of the vocabulary used in the passage, Wenham, similar to Williamson (see below), notes that it may be the result of the genre of the passage rather than its identification with a particular source. See Wenham, "The Priority of P," 247.

[106] Wenham, "The Priority of P," 247–49.

[107] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 256.

[108] Brueggemann, "Genesis 17," 55.

[109] Brueggemann, "Genesis 17," 57–58.

Those who argue against Genesis 17's identification with the P source include Matthews, who rejects the view that Genesis is composed of sources in the traditional sense and holds that Genesis 17 is an original part of the Abrahamic narratives all written by the same author. In addition, Williamson prefers a more synchronic reading of the text where the vocabulary and themes that would normally be used to identify this passage with P are merely the result of the genre of the passage and its covenantal context.[110] Essentially, Williamson, citing Alexander, points out that the language and grammar used might have less to do with a P source background and more to do with the covenant context that the passage is in, especially when compared to Noahic covenant language.[111] Williamson also rejects the notion that the covenant accounts of Genesis 15 and 17 are a doublet of the same covenant. Moreover, he argues that because of the difference among the obligations between the two covenants in Genesis 15 and 17 (Genesis 15 seemingly will be fulfilled unconditionally by God, at least when only surveying the immediate context of Genesis 15, whereas Genesis 17 requires Abrahams' participation), and the fourteen year gap between them, source critics need to answer the question as to why a redactor/scribe would simply not conflate the two covenants, as was allegedly done in the case of the flood narratives, in order to remove a discrepancy in which only one party participates in the covenant for fourteen years.[112] However, Williamson does admit the possibility that the discrepancy was inserted by a redactor/scribe in order to emphasize the relationship between the two covenants,

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[110] Mathews, *Genesis*, 104; Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 86–89. Kulling, while not rejecting Genesis 17's identification with P per se, does however place Genesis 17 in the 2nd millennium BCE which would make it antedate most scholarly options for the dating of P. See Külling, "The Dating of the So-Called 'P-Sections' in Genesis," 68.

[111] Matthews also challenges the criterion of P vocabulary as a distinguishing element of this passage. See Mathews, *Genesis*, 194.

[112] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 105 n.92. However, contrary to Williamson's contention, if these two covenants belong to two different sources, then the contrast isn't as sharp as he might hope. Moreover, the unconditional aspect is reduced by reading Genesis 15 (largely J) in its immediate context of the next J passage which is Genesis 18. In this passage, Specifically Genesis 18:19, Abraham is given conditions which he must fulfill as his side of the covenant.

but he makes it clear that the main focus of study should then be to understand the theological relationship between the two chapters rather than trying to splice them apart.[113]

From a redactional standpoint, Genesis, at the very least in its current form, has been edited to reflect the name change that occurs in this chapter, as the name Abram is used prior to and Abraham subsequent to this chapter. Moreover, the promise of progeny and kingly descendants is built on top of previous covenantal promises made by יהוה and is sealed through the changing of Abraham and Sarah's names.[114] Not only is the name usage of Abraham and Sarah evidence of this redaction of Genesis, but this chapter shows connections to other chapters, both prior and subsequent in terms of its content which also seem to suggest its edited nature.[115] Wenham points to the usage of the divine name, וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם, in the opening verse of chapter 17, other vocabulary and thematic elements similar to J texts, and the presence of circumcision in other sources all as indications that the editor was the author/editor of J.[116]

An Excursus on the Relationship Between Genesis 15 and 17

While Genesis 15 is not classified as P according to Noth, a short excursus comparing Genesis 15 and 17 is warranted given the influence of the two covenant chapters on the overall Abrahamic narrative. Often, these two chapters are seen in source-critical work on Genesis as different, and possibly independent, versions of a similar covenant ceremony. They are one of the "doublets" that are often paraded as evidence of the different versions of the Documentary

[113] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 105 n.92. This is a salient point that will be relevant in our discussion regarding the value of diachronic analysis for final form interpretation. Williamson makes it abundantly clear that a focus on how chapters 15 and 17 come from different sources can easily take away from understanding why they are placed the way they are in the received text as we now have it.

[114] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 21.

[115] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 18.

[116] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 18.

Hypothesis. The problem, for some scholars, is not only is Genesis 17 possibly dependent on Genesis 15, a position held by Wenham, Skinner, von Rad, McEvenue, Westermann, and Coats,[117] which would undermine the argument that these two covenant ceremonies represent independent versions of the same or similar event, but, if Williamson's arguments are to be given any merit, these two chapters represent two distinct covenants that are literarily and thematically connected. It is important to recognize, however, that this does not preclude that these covenants may still belong to two different sources with one dependent on the other, or, that if originally independent, have been edited to flow together. For example, while Genesis 17 likely builds upon the covenant in Genesis 15, the latter covenant does not necessarily anticipate the national developments found in the former. Williamson himself concedes this point, though he does also argue that both of these chapters pick up separate strands of Genesis 12:1–3, a point which when viewed from his larger argument implies they are complimentary passages from the same hand.[118]

In regards to the relationship between these two chapters, one of Williamson's main arguments against JEDP is that the covenant of Genesis 15, which according to Noth is J, makes no reference to Ishmael (although he is born in Genesis 16, a chapter largely comprised of J material), whereas Genesis 17 clearly presupposes his birth.[119] In terms of their literary connection, Williamson is quick to point out that both Sarah and Abraham's names are changed in Genesis 17, a change absent in Genesis 15 but a change that is represented both before and after the change in the narrative, though, as has been seen above, this could also be the activity of

[117] As cited by Wenham, Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 19.

[118] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 260–62.

[119] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 108–9, 187, 259.

a later redactor.[120] He also argues on this basis that each covenant served a distinct purpose: "Genesis 15 stresses Abraham's role as the progenitor of a single nation who would inherit the Promised Land, whereas Genesis 17 stresses Abraham's role as the 'father' of a multitude of nations who would inherit the promised blessing."[121] Williamson's conclusion is worth quoting at length:

> It has been established, therefore, that the covenant spoken of in Genesis 17 differs from that depicted in Genesis 15 in at least three important respects: (1) it incorporates different foci; viz. promises of international significance, royal descendants, and a divine-human relationship; (2) it involves human as well as divine obligations; viz. the ethical obligation of moral blamelessness and the ritual obligation of circumcision; (3) it is of a more permanent character; viz. it is described as 'everlasting'. For these reasons alone one should be most reluctant to equate the two covenants of which the chapters speak. In terms of promissory focus, the author and/or final editor of Genesis clearly distinguishes them.[122]

Although Williamson makes salient arguments regarding the differences between the two covenants, he also stresses that they are linked to one another. They have different promissory foci, but they have similar promissory threads surrounding Abraham's numerical proliferation and territorial inheritance.[123] For Williamson, the covenant of Genesis 17 is, therefore, a continuation, although in a transcendent fashion, of the covenant in Genesis 15, which both serve to reinforce the divine promises of Genesis 12:1–3.[124] However, for Williamson, this is the result

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[120] On the subject of name changes it is of interesting note that according to classic source classification both J and P contain an episode where Jacob is renamed to Israel (Genesis 32 = J, Genesis 35 = P), although only the J version contains the etymological reason for the change. Moreover though the name is changed in a similar fashion to Abraham and Sarah's, this change is not reflected in the subsequent narrative.

[121] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 106.

[122] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 187.

[123] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 212. It is worth noting perhaps that the differences between the promissory foci could be the result of the very documentary sources that Williamson is arguing against. If the texts are from different sources that are independent temporally or geographically but had access to other traditions, this could explain the common threads between them and yet the different emphasis that comes out in the overall product. Moreover, Williamson's synchronic reading still does not address the overarching question of whether his final author/editor melded together different sources in his own coherent narrative arc, which perhaps is to be expected as this is not the focus of synchronic interpretation.

[124] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 217.

of a synchronic reading of the text in which the above narrative arc is the production of a single author or editor and not the slow melding of various sources over time, which, as has been demonstrated, is also a possible explanation.

While Williamson makes great pains to demonstrate that the connection between these two chapters undermines a classic view of the Documentary Hypothesis, at least in this case, his reach falls short as a difference in emphasis could also be an indication of different sources with different larger narrative goals. Moreover, even if one were to grant his contention that both passages build off of separate strands of the promises found in Genesis 12:1–3 (J) and that Genesis 17 is also connected with the binding episode in Genesis 22 (E), this does not rule out the role of sources in the formation of the overall narrative but could point towards P's tight integration and interaction with both J and E.

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

The value of diachronic analysis in this chapter is somewhat inconclusive, but enlightening. At best, if we could assign a sure association of this chapter with P, and if we were able to obtain a sure identification of the time period in which P was written or redacted, then perhaps we would gain insight into why Abraham is portrayed as the father, physical or spiritual, of many nations. However, as it is, the emphasis of the chapter is not on why Abraham is connected to outsiders, but that he *is* connected with outsiders. If we take Williamson's contentions seriously regarding the spiritual fatherhood of Abraham as a mediator of blessing to the nations, then despite not knowing why the nations are privileged we can still see that they are allowed to participate in, and indeed may be the result of, Abraham's blessing. Moreover, Williamson's reading of Genesis 17 on a synchronic level demonstrates that sometimes spending

too much time on the diachronic elements of a text, while helpful in many situations, can also cause us to miss connections and interpretations that present themselves in the text as received. One can miss the proverbial forest for the trees. Nevertheless, comparing Williamson's synchronic arguments for explaining the state of the text with diachronic counterparts has been a helpful exercise to demonstrate the flexibility within source criticism to adapt to and explain the relationship between passages.

Genesis 23: The Purchase of a Burial Plot

Portrayal of Outsiders

In this chapter, Abraham attempts to purchase a burial plot of land for Sarah his wife from the "Hittites,"[125] and after some intricate negotiation, succeeds. The Hittites in turn recognize Abraham as a "mighty prince" (v. 6) and offer him the choicest of burial plots as a gift in which to bury Sarah. While some scholars portray this "gift" as a reluctance to allow him to own land, Westermann argues it is a "far-reaching accommodation with regard to a stranger."[126] This portrayal of the Hittites behaviour is perhaps serving to demonstrate the Hittites superior moral character, although more on this below. Matthews similarly argues that this treatment of Abraham as a stranger is different from the treatment portrayed to travelling strangers elsewhere in the narrative (c.f. Genesis 12:15, 19:9, and 20:2), which makes a relevant point that perhaps it

[125] Many scholars view the "Hittites" as a term simply to designate the indigenous people of the land, similar to "Canaanites" and having no relation to the later Hittites of the north. See Stephen C. Russell, "Abraham's Purchase of Ephron's Land in Anthropological Perspective," *BibInt* 21.2 (2013): 165; Speiser, *Genesis*, 172–73; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 373; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 126; Mathews, *Genesis*, 316–17.

[126] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 373.

is Abraham's standing and blessing which dictates his treatment, rather than simply the character of the Hittites.[127]

Instead of accepting the gift, Abraham purchases a burial plot from the Hittites for 400 shekels of silver, the appropriateness of which is debated among scholars. Some argue it is an exorbitant price, and others, such as Wenham and Matthews, are uncertain concerning its validity citing a lack of historical understanding of land prices.[128] Ephron may have been overcharging, or it may have been a substantial piece of property. However, whether the price is exorbitant or not, the important thing is that Abraham does not argue the price so as to ensure that he has an unchallengeable claim on the land.[129] Indeed, Baden highlights that the purchase of the cave gives Abraham "a permanent holding in Canaan."[130] Similar to the covenant between Abimelech and Abraham in Genesis 21, this transaction demonstrates the role of outsiders in legitimating and manifesting the blessings promised to Abraham by God.

Source-Critical Discussion

Although this chapter is classified as P by Noth and other scholars, it is also widely seen to be unlike P in both style and content.[131] Westermann argues that vv. 1–2 and 19 clearly

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[127] Mathews, *Genesis*, 319. See also Russell, "Abraham's Purchase of Ephron's Land in Anthropological Perspective," 170. This would point to an increased value of Abraham in the readers eyes at the possible expense of the outsiders in that the outsiders are not doing this because they are outstanding individuals, but merely because they have no choice: Abraham is blessed.

[128] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 375; Blenkinsopp, "Abraham as Paradigm in the Priestly History in Genesis," 239; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 129; Mathews, *Genesis*, 320.

[129] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 129; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 375. Indeed, Russell analyzes the narrative based on ancient property transfers and affirms that Abraham was seeking to establish a right to use the land specifically as a burial site for both himself and his heirs to come. See Russell, "Abraham's Purchase of Ephron's Land in Anthropological Perspective," 126.

[130] Baden, "The Continuity of the Non-Priestly Narrative from Genesis to Exodus," 171.

[131] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 124; Mathews, *Genesis*, 311; Sean E. McEvenue, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer*, vol. 50 of *AnBib* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 22.

distinguish this as part of the priestly work, but does not clearly elaborate on why, except to say that the true point of the story is the acquisition of property for burial which he points to as a development from the exilic period which is also when he argues P emerges.[132] Moreover, citing H. Petschow, he points out that this sale matches details of contracts found in the neo-Babylonian period.[133] Consequently, Westermann's arguments for associating this passage with P seem to depend solely on his assumption of P's composition in the exilic period. In a similar vein, Blenkinsopp writes:

> A date for the P History in the later Neo-Babylonian or early Persian period, as proposed earlier, would permit the suggestion that in this incident Abraham is being proposed as a model for immigrants from the Babylonian Diaspora in their relations with the indigenous peoples, and this with special reference to the crucial issue of the acquisition or recovery of land. The suggestion is given substance by parallels that have been noted between the legal proceedings in Genesis 23 and land contracts from Mesopotamia of the Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid periods.[134]

Matthews on the other hand rejects that it is P, as he rejects the Documentary Hypothesis in general, and also holds that it flows with the rest of the narrative and is not an interruption between the birth, sacrifice, and marriage of Isaac.[135] Similarly, Wenham does not think there is anything specifically identifying the passage as P.[136] Likewise, Emerton states: "The chapter is certainly different from other P material and if it belongs to P, must probably be regarded as an adaptation of earlier material."[137]

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[132] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 371, 376.

[133] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 83. See also Gene M. Tucker, "Legal Background of Genesis 23," *JBL* 85.1 (1966): 77, 81–84.

[134] Blenkinsopp, "Abraham as Paradigm in the Priestly History in Genesis," 240. See also Brett, "Permutations of Sovereignty in the Priestly Tradition," 390–91. It is also worth noting however, that Bray for one deems the links between this passage and the exile as "tenuous." See Jason S. Bray, "Genesis 23—A Priestly Paradigm for Burial," *JSOT* 18.60 (1993): 70.

[135] Mathews, *Genesis*, 311.

[136] Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 125.

[137] Emerton, "The Priestly Writer in Genesis," 388.

The question remains then as to why this passage is often classified as P. Despite his previously stated contention, Emerton nevertheless puts forward the following evidences in support of its P status: the reference to Sarah's age when she died is similar to other P passages, it is at least different in style from JE passages, and the existence of P vocabulary in the passage (for example, the usage of בני־חת rather than החתי).[138] Emerton concludes that though the arguments for P are not as strong as other passages, they are "not negligible."[139] Added to these arguments could also be Friedman's contention that the burial site is located in Hebron, a priestly Aaronid city, and that P was an Aaronid document.[140] This supports the theory that this passage is at least priestly in scope if not part of the original P source.

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

It is possible that an understanding of when the text originates from could determine if the price was fair or whether Abraham was being taken advantage of as well as help to understand whether the language used by the Hittites regarding Abraham was merely a social custom, or an honourific attitude towards him. The problem, however, is that these concerns could also be taken up under traditional historical criticism from a synchronic perspective, although that would have diachronic implications underlying it. Nevertheless, if it could be proven beyond reasonable doubt that this passage, and perhaps more generally the P material it is identified with, originates from the exile, as argued by Blenkinsopp, it would provide an insightful window into the cultural context of exilic Jews and their interactions with outsiders.

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[138] Emerton, "The Priestly Writer in Genesis," 388–89.

[139] Emerton, "The Priestly Writer in Genesis," 389.

[140] Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 27.

Yet, as has been the case throughout this study, the demonstration of such a point beyond reasonable doubt is dubious at best.

Conclusion

If one were simply to accept Noth's classifications of the priestly narrative and not become bogged down in the myriad of discussions and debate surrounding each individual passage, then perhaps diachronic analysis would be a worthy tool for final form interpretation in every case. However, there are many instances in the above P passages that deal with Abraham's interaction with outsiders where a source-critical discussion may only serve to distract from other elements and themes within the text. Indeed, in this specific dimension of our case study, the insights gleaned from examining how Abraham interacted with outsiders are not directly or obviously enriched by understanding the individual passage's origins from any particular source. When taken individually, how Abraham interacted with outsiders remains largely the same, regardless if one views these passages as written even by Moses himself or composed through various redactional processes. A factor that could contribute to the shortcoming of diachronic analysis in this chapter is the limited number of examples within the Abrahamic narratives of the P source. An avenue for further study would be to conduct a similar case study in a section of the Pentateuch where all of the classic sources are relatively equally represented. It is also worth noting that certain elements may have had a particular relevance for their intended audience that is lost on modern scholars because we are unable to correctly place the texts in a particular moment in time. Thus we are once again brought to the tension of the inability to know for certain whether the outcomes of diachronic analysis hold true, and yet the necessity of diachronic analysis for a "fuller" understanding of any text. What can be enhanced by diachronic analysis in

general, and in this case source-critical study in particular, is why Abraham's interaction with outsiders may be portrayed as it is; however, it must also be understood that this answer may only ever be a "best guess" scenario.

Nevertheless, where diachronic analysis really shines is in the big picture comparisons between different sources. It is here that the P source's depiction of outsiders can be fittingly compared to other views within the Hebrew bible, such as the negative views found in Deuteronomy and Ezra/Nehemiah, as was shown above.

THE PORTRAYAL OF OUTSIDERS IN GENESIS 14

Introduction

Genesis 14 constitutes a passage that is almost unanimously not attributed to one of the main sources of the Pentateuch by classic source critics, Noth included. Inasmuch, it will here be treated briefly as a special source, much in the same manner as the previous chapters, although, due to its independent nature, any source-critical discussion will largely occur at the outset in the discussion on historical context, rather than following the section on outsiders. Subsequent to that, we will again address the value of diachronic analysis.

Characteristics of the Source

The passage is clearly differentiated from the other sources of Genesis because of its idiosyncratic and annalistic style and content.[1] Wenham notes that this passage is the only place in Genesis where an account of a military campaign occurs with the names of various kings appearing.[2] Margalith, among other scholars, identifies the whole chapter as a type of "hero story," where several traditions have been cobbled together to serve as the background for the exploits of an ancestral hero.[3] Wenham also notes that the passage is, "marked by a large number of explanatory glosses, verbless clauses explaining old place names," etc.[4] The text utilizes a number of stylistic devices including chiasms in its listing of the kings names who participated in

[1] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 304–6.

[2] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 304.

[3] Othniel Margalith, "The Riddle of Genesis 14 and Melchizedek," *ZAW* 112.4 (2000): 504–5; John A. Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," *VT* 21.4 (1971): 431–32; Scott Morschauser, "Campaigning on Less than a Shoe-String: An Ancient Egyptian Parallel to Abram's 'Oath' in Genesis 14.22–13," *JSOT* 38.2 (2013): 131.

[4] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 304.

the battles.[5] Emerton notes that the blessing of Melchizedek may have its origin as poetry.[6] Wenham also alludes to a number of possible paranomastic instances in the Hebrew which would indicate a high level of literary skill.[7]

Is it a Contiguous Narrative or Fragmentary?

While many scholars note the passage's unity, there are also some who argue it consists of several sources tacked together.[8] Wenham rejects the view that the passage is made up of several sources as he sees it as "a substantial unity, part of the larger Abram-Lot cycle, with a number of glosses that may be ascribed to a J-editor."[9] Tatu similarly argues for the literary unity of the chapter.[10] Westermann, among other scholars, on the other hand holds that it is made up of at least two main constituent parts: vv. 1–11, and vv. 12–24 (with vv. 18–20 as a later insertion).[11] Westermann argues that the insertion of vv. 18–20 came from a later period with the intention to legitimate the cultic exchange (blessing and tribute) found therein.[12] It is worth noting that these opposing views may be remedied by an understanding that although Genesis 14 is crafted from several sources, it is nonetheless *crafted* and, therefore, contains a unity of its own.

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[5] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 305.

[6] John A. Emerton, "Some False Clues in the Study of Genesis 14," *VT* 21.1 (1971): 27–29.

[7] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 305.

[8] For a summary of the arguments see Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 189–90.

[9] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 307.

[10] Silviu Tatu, "Making Sense of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18–20)," *JESOT* 3.1 (2014): 56–62.

[11] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 189–92. Emerton, Gammie, and Smith also hold vv. 18–20 to be a later insertion. See Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 408–12; John G. Gammie, "Loci of the Melchizedek Tradition of Genesis 14:18–20," *JBL* 90.4 (1971): 485; Robert Houston Smith, "Abram and Melchizedek (Gen 14:18–20)," *ZAW* 77.2 (1965): 129–30.

[12] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 192.

Historical Context

As was noted above, this passage is generally not attributed to any of the traditional Pentateuchal sources and is largely regarded as an independent source.[13] There have been some scholars throughout the modern era who have argued for its inclusion among the J source, such as Hupfield, Delitzsch, Lubsczyk, Vawter, Alexander, and Coats.[14] Wenham himself notes that this is indeed plausible as there are a number of elements that connect it to surrounding passages.[15] Emerton argues that while it may not be part of any of the traditional sources, it may be dependent on one or more of them.[16] Given the passage's integration with earlier and later Lot episodes, Emerton argues that it may be dependent upon J, though it is also possible that the J editor has simply integrated it into his overall narrative by adding the Lot elements to this passage.[17]

What scholars aren't so agreed upon is the dating of this source, with some regarding it as one of the earliest sources and with others seeing it as one of the latest.[18] Wenham argues that it represents an old tradition, contending that it is a pre-J tradition that has been edited by subsequent redactors/scribes to better connect it to surrounding passages.[19] Wenham demonstrates this by pointing to some indications from the names of the kings that the passage

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[13] Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 404; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 306; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 188; Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 316 n.16; Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 52. It should be noted that Emerton does not argue for its independence as will be seen below.

[14] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 306–7.

[15] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 306–7.

[16] Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 404.

[17] Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 406–7. In support of this see the below note on Mamre as a personal name in this chapter versus a place name in other Genesis texts.

[18] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 306. See also Emerton's summary of the history of Genesis 14: Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 437–38.

[19] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 307.

may be from the eighteenth century BCE.[20] However, Westermann cautions against dating the entire passage from vv. 1–11, stating that the date of the overall passage, and indeed the period of Abraham in general, cannot be demonstrated from them as he holds these verses to be an independent tradition within the passage.[21] Moreover, Westermann argues that the overall composition and combination of the constituent elements of Genesis 14 could only have taken place in the postexilic period, with portions, such as vv. 12–24 (minus vv. 18–20) coming from the period of the judges.[22] As a result, Westermann argues that the passage as a whole is a very late addition to the Abraham cycle.[23]

Nevertheless, that Abraham is referenced as a "Hebrew," a term that the Israelites did not use to describe themselves, and may be related to the well documented term "Habiru/Apiru" from the ANE, may indicate that the entire account is based upon an ancient, non-Israelite source.[24] Wenham notes that the "Apiru" were "usually on the periphery of society—foreign slaves, mercenaries, or even marauders. Here Abram fits this description well: he is an outsider vis à vis Canaanite society, and he is about to set off on a military campaign on behalf of the king of Sodom as well as Lot. He is 'a typical hapiru of the Amarna type' (H. Cazelles, *POTT*,

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[20] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 308, 318–19. For more on the names of the kings and possible ancient counterparts, see Emerton, "Some False Clues in the Study of Genesis 14," 30–47; David S. Farkas, "In Search of the Biblical Hammurabi," *JBQ* 39.3 (2011): 159–164; Margalith, "The Riddle of Genesis 14 and Melchizedek," 501–3.

[21] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 190. Emerton also holds that vv. 1–11 are part of a pre-existent source of Mesopotamian origin. See Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 435–36.

[22] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 192, 203. It should be noted that many of Westermann's justifications for the postexilic composition are highly subjective in their nature. For the tying of vv. 12–24 to the period of the judges see Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 203. For another post-exilic or "diaspora" reading, see Volker Glissmann, "Genesis 14: A Diaspora Novella?," *JSOT* 34.1 (2009): 33–45.

[23] Westermann, *The Promises to the Fathers*, 74.

[24] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 313; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 188. Westermann however views the usage of "Hebrew" as an anachronism from a later time. See Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 199–200. Emerton views its usage as a possible indication that vv. 12–24 (minus vv. 18–20) stemmed from shortly prior to the Davidic time when usage of the word is attested. See Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 434–35.

22).”[25] Because “Habiru/Apiru” is not an ethnic term, but more of a class of people, it is possible that the “Hebrews” were a substrate of this larger group.[26] Moreover, as was noted, “Hebrew” is not a term the Israelites generally applied to themselves, unless in reference to foreigners, and it appears only in early literature, with the exception of references to the law of Exodus 21:2 (Deuteronomy 15:12; Jeremiah 34:9, 14) and Jonah 1:9.[27] Wenham also describes many aspects of the passage’s vocabulary and phrases, such as “trained men,” and “not a thread or a shoelace” that demonstrate its antiquity.[28] Another possible supporting aspect of the passage’s antiquity is that Melchizedek portrays “El-ʿElyôn” as “the maker of heaven and earth” (קֹנֵה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ). This epithet is similar to אל קן ארץ which appears on a ca. 8th century BCE Hebrew ostracon found in Jerusalem (see COS 2.49) and in a Phoenician inscription from the 7th century BCE (Karatepe A 3:18–19; see COS 2:31).[29] Wenham notes that the same epithet (“the maker of heaven and earth”) was applied to the God of Israel by later Hebrew poets (Psalms 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3) though in each of these later instances the Hebrew was changed to עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ, possibly to avoid the sexual connotation of קנה (cf. Genesis 4:1), a point which is also supported by Gammie, and Tatu.[30] In regards to this epithet, Westermann also notes that it

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[25] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 313. My thesis supervisor, Dr. Craig Broyles, also pointed out that “Hapiru” in the ANE appears in roughly the same time period as “Hebrew” in the OT (S Mesopotamia [Ur III, I Babylon], N Mesopotamia: Nuzi [15th century BCE], Mari [18th century BCE], Alalakh [17th and 15th centuries BCE], Anatolia: Cappadocian Texts [19th century BCE], Hittite [14th century BCE], Ugarit [14th century BCE], Egyptian Empire [15th-12th centuries BCE] → enemies/rebels in Asia, slaves in Egypt [so under Ramesses II], and the Amarna letters [14th century BCE] → hostile parties in Canaan). Moreover, he noted that similar to the epithet “God of the Hebrews” (Exodus 3:18; 5:3; 7:16) the Hapiru would swear by “the gods of the Hapiru”, especially in Hittite texts.

[26] Wenham affirms the non-ethnic nature of the term, though the possibility of the “Hebrews” belonging to this larger class was suggested by my thesis supervisor, Dr. Craig Broyles. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 313.

[27] I am indebted to my thesis supervisor Dr. Craig Broyles for noting this point and the references of “Hebrew” in the rest of the Hebrew Bible.

[28] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 319. Wenham notes that חניכים is found in “a nineteenth-century Egyptian text and in a fifteenth-century Taanak letter.” See also Morschauser, “Campaigning on Less than a Shoe-String.”

[29] I am indebted to my thesis supervisor Dr. Craig Broyles for providing this point and the references.

[30] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 317; Gammie, “Loci of the Melchizedek Tradition,” 386; Tatu, “Making Sense of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18–20),” 71. For more on the Psalms and their possible historical contexts, see Broyles,

was a common Canaanite cultic formula, but that it could have only found its way into Israelite usage after the formation of the Israelite monarchy and not the period of the patriarchs.[31] It should be noted that the latter points demonstrating the passage's overall antiquity do not necessarily contradict Westermann's argument that the passage found its current form in the post-exilic period, they do however demonstrate that even some of the supposed "later" elements of the passage could, and likely do, still originate in antiquity.

Emerton also makes a case that vv. 18–20 originated during the time of the Davidic kingship, which, given other connections to this time, seems plausible.[32] To me, it is more probable that the text was put into its present form in the pre-exilic period from a few sources, than Westermann's contention that the passage was crafted in the post-exilic period by combining vv. 12–24 with vv. 1–11.[33] While I think some of his arguments have merit, to me they do not sufficiently answer the question as to why vv. 12–24 could stand as their own independent episode. Certainly vv. 1–11 could have been an ancient tradition, but to argue that this was only added to vv. 12–24 in the post-exilic period, after vv. 12–24 were already an independent tradition, robs the story of its overall force.[34] Nevertheless, whenever the text came to its present form, it has been demonstrated above that it certainly contains many elements and features from antiquity.

Psalms, 429–31, 448–49, 453–54, 466, 475. Note however that Della Vida contends "קנה" does not mean "to create" but rather "Lord." The epithet would then be translated, "lord of heaven and earth." See Giorgio Levi Della Vida, "El 'Elyon in Genesis 14:18–20," *JBL* 63.1 (1944): 1 n. 1.

[31] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 206.

[32] Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 421–25. Smith however argues that vv. 18–20 are from an old tradition, dating possibly to the second millennium BCE. So too Tatu, who states, "This story could not have been written during the time of the monarchy." See Smith, "Abram and Melchizedek," 130–31; Tatu, "Making Sense of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18–20)," 75–76.

[33] For Westermann's reasoning, see Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 207–8.

[34] See also Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 436–37; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 307.

Textual Context

Genesis 14 is clearly demarcated from the surrounding passages with the first verse using the Hebrew phrase ויהי and the chapter ending with a note of participants in the battle taking their share. This is then buttressed in the next chapter by a clear narrative break. In terms of connections and allusions to the rest of the Abrahamic narratives, Williamson notes that Abraham's acting in the sphere of kings, conducting and winning battles against them, is a possible foreshadowing and echo of the promises of Genesis 12 where God promises to make Abraham's name great and make him into a great nation.[35] Moreover, Wenham notes that the blessing of Melchizedek over Abraham is an allusion to the blessing of Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3, as will also be seen below of Abraham's juxtaposed interaction between Melchizedek and the king of Sodom.[36] In terms of story arc, this passage connects well literarily with the rest of the Lot cycle.[37] In the previous chapter Lot moves near Sodom, where he is captured in this chapter, and in Genesis 19 Sodom is destroyed, arguably from the perspective of the narrative in some part, though not explicitly, because of the king of Sodom's treatment of Abraham in this passage; because he disdained Abraham, he is cursed.[38] Abraham's association with Mamre in this chapter also fits, albeit somewhat awkwardly given that one is a personal name and the other a location, with his departure from Lot and settling near the "oaks of Mamre" in Genesis 13:18. Finally, God's declaration in Genesis 15:1 that he is Abraham's "shield" could be seen as a

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[35] Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 254.

[36] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 317. Williamson notes, "Given the royal associations found in that chapter [Genesis 14], such allusions [of the international aspect of divine blessing] are perhaps unsurprising." See Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, 255 n. 131.

[37] For more on how this passage fits within the overall Abrahamic narrative, and possible within the J source, see Morschauser, "Campaigning on Less than a Shoe-String," 141, 143–44; Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 274 n.113.

[38] It should be emphasized that the narrative does not present this explicitly as the reason for the destruction of Sodom, but it is at the very least an interesting coincidence.

reference to Abraham's miraculous victory over the foreign kings in this chapter, though the portrayal of the Amorites in Genesis 14 stands in stark contrast to their portrayal in Genesis 15:16.

Occurrences of Outsiders

Genesis 14: War and Peace

Portrayal of Outsiders

The passage first involves three battles, the first two between a coalition of eastern kings, led by Chedorlaomer, and their former vassals in which the eastern kings soundly claim victory and in the process capture Lot and his family. The third battle is then between Abraham and these victorious kings in order to rescue Lot. A point of interest is that when the messenger comes to inform Abraham of Lot's capture in v. 13, it is noted that Abraham is an ally with Mamre, an Amorite, which given the disdain for the Amorites in other passages in the Hebrew Bible is quite significant.[39] Abraham is portrayed as defeating the kings, seemingly defying the insurmountable odds that were against such a victory given his paltry number of fighting men, and as he is returning he meets with the king of Sodom and Melchizedek who occupy center stage in the remaining narrative.

[39] See also below regarding Melchizedek's possible Amorite background. For examples of later disdain for Amorites in the Hebrew Bible see Genesis 15:16 (see E chapter above), 1 Kings 21:26, and 2 Kings 21:11. Emerton notes that the inclusion of these characters both here and in v. 24 is likely a later gloss. See Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 404. It is also curious that Mamre here is referenced as a person, whereas elsewhere in Genesis (23:17, 19; 25:9; 49:30; 50:13) it is a reference to a place. See Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 299; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 181. This is possibly a further indication that Genesis 14 is an ancient source, as it is logical that the dwelling of an individual named Mamre at a location could give rise to that place being identified with him in later literature.

Melchizedek, referenced as the king of Salem and a priest of "El-ʿElyôn," is introduced as bringing out bread and wine for Abraham and speaking a blessing over him in the name of "El-ʿElyôn," seemingly confirming the blessing given to Abraham by יהוה in Genesis 12.[40] Abraham then gives a tenth of the spoils as a tithe to Melchizedek.[41] Melchizedek is thought to be king of Jerusalem, based on early biblical associations as well as a similar name given to another king of Jerusalem, "Adonizedek," in Joshua 10:1, though it may be possible that this association was imposed later.[42] Interestingly, in Joshua 10:5 Adonizedek is specifically referred

[40] Della Vida argues that "El-ʿElyôn" is the conflation of two separate Canaanite deities, merged here by the author/editor of the passage in order to associate the recognizable God of Melchizedek ("El") with the universal God of Abraham ("ʿElyôn"). See Levi Della Vida, "El 'Elyon in Genesis 14," 9. See also the note on El-ʿElyôn below. It is also interesting given the connections argued above and below regarding Jerusalem, Melchizedek, and Amorites, that *DDD* notes that "Many scholars believe that the pre-Israelite cult at Jerusalem worshipped the God El-ʿElyôn. There is also evidence to suggest that Yahweh was originally worshipped as El-ʿElyôn at Shiloh before David's capture of Jerusalem…" See E. E. Elnes and Patrick D. Miller, "Elyon," in *DDD*, ed. Karel Van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem van Der Horst (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 295. Smith argues that Abraham and Melchizedek are participating in a suzerainty type treaty, with Abraham being the superior party. Smith maintains this based on his view that it is not Abraham who gives Melchizedek the tithe, but Melchizedek who gives it to Abraham. This has merit from a grammatical perspective, as is seen in the below note, but from the overall perspective of the verses does not hold up under scrutiny. See Smith, "Abram and Melchizedek," 131–36.

[41] It is interesting that the text does not specify who is giving the tithe as there is no explicit subject, nor indirect object, to the verb. Although Abraham makes logical sense as the subject in the larger context given his newly acquired loot and the sacral nature of the tithe, the obvious grammatical antecedent subject in the immediate context is Melchizedek who has been the primary subject of the preceding verses, with Abraham being the indirect object receiving the tithe. See also Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 407–8; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 187, 203, 206.

[42] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 316. Some of these associations also include David's high priest in Jerusalem "Zadok," Psalm 110 associates the king in Zion with Melchizedek, Psalm 76:3 parallels Zion and Salem, both Josephus (*Ant.* 1.10.2 [1:180]) and the Genesis Apocryphon (22.13) associate Salem with Jerusalem, and this text views Melchizedek as a southern figure, associated with the king of Sodom. For more on the connections between Salem, Jerusalem, Melchizedek, Zadok, and Psalms 110 and 76:3 see Broyles, *Psalms*, 312, 415; Knohl, *The Divine Symphony*, 91, 94; Elnes and Miller, "DDD," 297–98. Westermann also argues that vv. 18–20 were likely inserted during the time of David. See Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 192, 203. Interestingly, this could bear some credence, given the above argued association between Melchizedek, Jerusalem, and David, in light of 2 Samuel 21's similarly favourable views of the Amorites. For more on the meaning of Melchizedek's name and other possible associations, see Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 204; Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 412–13; Tatu, "Making Sense of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18–20)," 62–65. However, Gammie notes that Noth established that Adonizedek in Joshua 10 was not original. See Gammie, "Loci of the Melchizedek Tradition," 390. Nevertheless, he does conclude that though the Melchizedek tradition did not originate with Jerusalem *originally*, it did make its way there from Shechem. See Gammie, "Loci of the Melchizedek Tradition," 389–96. Margalith also argues against identification with Jerusalem, noting that though Jerusalem is known by several ancient names, Salem is not one of them. See Margalith, "The Riddle of Genesis 14 and Melchizedek," 506–8. Therefore, Gammie's argument that it was not originally Jerusalem that was referenced may bear weight. See also Smith, "Abram and Melchizedek," 139–52; Tatu, "Making Sense of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18–20)," 65–69. For more on later traditions and associations of

to as a king of the "Amorites," which bears fascinating significance given Abraham's association with Mamre, cited as an Amorite in this passage, as well as his preferential treatment of Melchizedek. It is possible, if other evidence associating Salem with Jerusalem is accepted, that Melchizedek is also an Amorite king which would further demonstrate a curious favour of the Amorites in this passage.[43]

Contrary to Melchizedek, the king of Sodom has quite a different reaction. Rather than blessing Abraham who just defeated the coalition of kings that he and his allies could not, he demands a portion of the tribute recovered from the victory.[44] Abraham, instead of being insulted by this not only acquiesces to the king of Sodom's request, but exceeds it and surrenders his rights to the spoils, asking only for sustenance and that his allies get their share.[45]

It is of note that in Abraham's response to the king of Sodom in the MT he connects "El-ʿElyôn" with יהוה.[46] However, the divine name is omitted in other ancient textual witnesses including the LXX, Samaritan Pentateuch, and 1Q Genesis Apocryphon. Wenham points to its inclusion here as a likely Yahwistic gloss.[47] Westermann on the other hand, against the existing textual witnesses, argues that יהוה alone was in the original and that "El-ʿElyôn" is a later

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Melchizedek, see Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "Melchizedek in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," *JSNT* 41.1 (2018): 124–138.

[43] See also Ezekiel 16:3, 45 which declares that the father of Jerusalem was an Amorite.

[44] Morschauser however sees the statement of the king of Sodom in quite a different light, seeing it instead as an offer of generosity. Emerton also seems to hint at this. See Morschauser, "Campaigning on Less than a Shoe-String," 131; Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 423.

[45] There are many theories as to the exact reasoning behind Abraham's refusal to take the loot, but they are beyond the scope of the present chapter. For examples, see Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 423–25; Morschauser, "Campaigning on Less than a Shoe-String," 129–35; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 202–3. Morschauser also argues that the traditional depiction of the king of Sodom being "rude" toward Abraham may not actually be valid and is instead influenced by the fate of Sodom later in the Abrahamic narratives. See Morschauser, "Campaigning on Less than a Shoe-String," 141–43.

[46] For more on the possible identification and origins of "El-ʿElyôn" see Levi Della Vida, "El 'Elyon in Genesis 14"; Tatu, "Making Sense of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18–20)," 69–71. For other Israelite associations between El-ʿElyôn and יהוה see Elnes and Miller, "DDD," 296–97.

[47] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 318.

addition meant to harmonize this passage with vv. 18–20 which he argues was a later insertion.[48] The validity of the insertion of vv. 18–20 notwithstanding, Westermann's argument here is not convincing, and seems to stem solely from his assumption that vv. 18–20 must be a later insertion.

There is an interesting portrayal of outsiders in regards to the names of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah that could also play into the later Sodom episodes. Wenham notes that the names for the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah are compounded with the Hebrew words for evil (רע) and wicked (רשע) respectively.[49]

The portrayal of Melchizedek and his prominent status in later Israelite texts is a testament to how the portrayal of outsiders in this chapter mirrors that in the rest of the Abrahamic narratives: outsiders are not disdained or preferentially treated simply based on their status as outsiders, but are treated based upon how they situate themselves in relationship with Abraham and his God.

A Reflection on the Value of Diachronic Analysis in this Instance

This passage bears particular relevance for our present overall study. Whereas previous explorations have been admittedly less fruitful given the difficulty in dating specific sections of text, this passage, at least those sections that prominently deal with outsiders, is somewhat more sure in its dating as demonstrated at several points above. While no such argument for dating can claim absolute certainty, there is substantial evidence and connections to conclude that the section dealing with Melchizedek (vv. 18–20) originated in the time of the united monarchy, indeed probably from the time of David, given the connection with 2 Samuel 21's favourable

[48] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 202.

[49] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 309.

views of Amorites. This conclusion, achieved through diachronic analysis, can help to demonstrate the curious prominence, and even favour, given to an outsider by the text. At the very least this passage can be seen as an attempt to legitimate the Davidic capital in the eyes of both the Israelites and the still existing Canaanite elements in the land.[50] Beyond this, if Melchizedek's status as an Amorite is to be granted, this helps provide further evidence that this passage originated in the time of David when there is documented concern for the remnants of the Amorites (2 Samuel 21) as well as explaining this further curious feature of the text. In short, diachronic analysis in this instance has provided an invaluable window into not only when the text likely originated, but why it was produced, at least for portions of it. Moreover, it can help to explain the jarring shift in opinion concerning Amorites in this chapter and Genesis 15.

Conclusion

Overall, the portrayal of outsiders in this passage is positive. The warring kings are not overtly portrayed as evil or disdainful simply because they are outsiders, but rather their actions are narrated in a matter-of-fact manner. Chedorlaomer's early military victories are used as a foil to demonstrate Abraham's prowess and value. The only outsider who is portrayed in an overtly negative manner is the king of Sodom, who appears begrudging, if not mildly disdainful, towards Abraham's unexpected help in recovering stolen property. This is in turn starkly contrasted with the portrayal of Melchizedek who not only recognizes Abraham's victory, but honours and blesses him. Abraham also takes the unprecedented step of giving a tithe to Melchizedek, thereby demonstrating a high regard for his office as priest of El-ʿElyôn, if not him personally. Wenham

[50] Emerton, "Riddle of Genesis 14," 437.

notes that this story serves to reinforce what was declared in Genesis 12:1–3: those who bless Abraham are themselves blessed, and those who disdain him are cursed.[51]

[51] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 321–22.

CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis sought to answer three main questions: how were outsiders portrayed in the Abrahamic narratives, are there any differences between how they are portrayed in the classic sources of the Pentateuch according to the Documentary Hypothesis, and what is the value of diachronic analysis for final form interpretation. These questions were answered by way of a case study concerning the first two questions that in turn answered the third.

In the Abrahamic narratives, outsiders are shown surprising care and attention. It has been demonstrated that throughout the Abrahamic narratives, and arguably therefore throughout Israelite history, there is an enduring understanding of God's clear preference for his chosen and yet also a remarkable consciousness regarding the treatment and status of outsiders.

In regards to the second question, there are slight nuances in how the different sources portray outsiders. In the J source, apart from the Hagar episode, care for outsiders is largely presented in terms of hospitality. Extreme care for the outsiders is shown in both the Hagar episode as well as Abraham and Lot's treatment of the strangers and Abraham pleading on behalf of the residents of Sodom. Furthermore, throughout the narrative, outsiders are blessed largely based on how they position themselves in relationship with Abraham and his God yet with the clear contention that outsiders *will* be blessed in some fashion no matter what. Indeed, Abraham's deception of Pharaoh in Genesis 12 displays that clear preference is shown for God's chosen sometimes despite their actions in the narrative which may seem to the reader as immoral.

In the E source there is a definite emphasis on personal care for outsiders by the deity. Similar in some regards to the J source, God shows great care for Abimelech in Genesis 20 to

prevent him from "sinning" but simultaneously still shows clear preference for Abraham despite his dubious behaviour. Moreover, this episode presents outsiders as possibly more righteous than Abraham, or at least more righteous than Abraham gave them credit for. The Hagar-Ishmael episode demonstrates God's clear care for the outcast, something that would be echoed in the later prophetic writings. Abimelech also serves as an important source of external validation for Abraham's blessing, a blessing that is also described in Genesis 22 as no longer just affecting Abraham, but also his descendants.

Conversely, P is much more neutral towards care for outsiders, although it does connect them to Abraham and they have a role in confirming his blessing. Abraham marries Hagar with no comment regarding her status as an outsider, whether positive or negative. While it is true that the birth of Ishmael causes tension with Sarah, this tension is not framed around Hagar's outsider status. In addition, many nations will have some sort of tie and claim on Abraham's fatherhood, but the immediate narrative does not elaborate what this will necessarily look like. Finally, the Hittites, though they may be portrayed in a negative light in Genesis 23, still have a role in establishing and fulfilling God's promises for Abraham.

Similar to the J source, Genesis 14 seems to emphasize how outsiders place themselves in relationship with Abraham. Melchizedek is given prominent status as an outsider who is ostensibly a priest of Abraham's God and in his blessing of Abraham is contrasted with the implied disdain for Abraham shown by the king of Sodom. Within the immediate and larger context of the Abrahamic narratives this demonstrates that outsiders are treated based on how they position themselves to Abraham and his God, with Melchizedek receiving a tithe and the king of Sodom possibly receiving his demise with the destruction of Sodom in the subsequent

narrative. In contrast to the E source, this chapter demonstrates a curious portrayal and indifference, if not favour, towards the Amorites.

An area for further profitable study would be to apply a similar methodology, though not necessarily a similar line of investigation, to a portion of the Pentateuch that contains more equal representation of each of the sources in order to further an understanding of the relationship between the sources. Moreover, given the noted differences between the sources' portrayal of outsiders, it would be profitable to understand the implications of these differences in light of the possible order and date of composition of the sources and what this may tell us concerning the trajectory of Israelite religion and their conception of the "other." A similar study based on pre-Samaritan Hebrew texts would also provide an interesting insight into divergences among the textual traditions.

All of these points serve to answer the larger question regarding the value of diachronic analysis for understanding the text as it stands, as the different portrayal of outsiders in different sections of the Abrahamic narratives can be in part explained by different sources with their own contexts. This was also demonstrated as other curious features of the text were encountered. For example, viewing the passage through with the framework of the Documentary Hypothesis allows the reader to explain how although internal evidence within Genesis 12:1–3 points towards a reflexive interpretation, its usage in the larger narrative points towards the passive and/or middle sense. Such a realization would be lost were the text simply viewed from the synchronic level. Similarly it allows us to explain other peculiar features of the text such as why Sarah might be considered so beautiful by Abimelech at her advanced age as the result of the combination of sources rather than coming up with other theories about rejuvenation, etc.[1]

[1] For more on the theories put forward see the above section on Abimelech's desire to marry Sarah in the E chapter.

Though the present case study did not necessarily uncover any stark and surprising differences in the portrayal of outsiders among the various sources running throughout the Abrahamic narratives, though as noted above it did demonstrate nuanced approaches, the value of diachronic interpretation was clearly displayed at various points. Moreover, because my study did not necessarily seek to make any sweeping conclusions on the validity of any *particular* form of the Documentary Hypothesis we were able to avoid being bogged down in some of the incessant argumentation and uncertainty that accompanies such an endeavor. Instead, I sought to simply address the validity of *any* form of the Documentary Hypothesis to explain the text as it now stands. I think this is a point that cannot be understated. Many who enter the dizzying field of Pentateuchal criticism and the source-critical work that occurs therein can be dismayed by the sheer number of competing theories that claim to offer the most compelling answer as to how the Pentateuch developed to the form as we now have it. As a result of this wide disagreement on the exact details, it is easy to understand why someone would reject the framework that Genesis is composed of various sources as a valid and demonstrable lens through which one can understand the Pentateuch. Nevertheless, they would be missing the proverbial reality of the forest because of all the people arguing what types of trees constitute it. In the present study, I have demonstrated that, although it does have certain drawbacks and ambiguities, diachronic analysis, in the form of source criticism, is a powerful and cogent tool for understanding, if not necessarily fully explaining, the many peculiar features that exist in the Abrahamic narratives and in part how the text became what it is. That this similarly applies to the remainder of the Pentateuch is a logical extrapolation. It is here that we should be reminded, as noted by Nicholson, why Julius Wellhausen put forward his theories on the origins of the Pentateuch to begin with: they were not

an end in and of themselves, but a means to understand the development of Israelite religion.[2] So too should we remember that these theories merely offer a framework. It is what we do with that framework that matters.

[2] Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen*, 3.

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